

**Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:**

You're listening to Work in Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Work in Progress explores the rapidly changing workplace through conversations with innovators, educators, and decision makers, people with solutions to today's workforce challenges.

By 2030, two-thirds of all jobs are going to require an advanced- or medium-level of digital skills. These are not just tech jobs, but jobs across all industries.

Today, Hispanics are 14% of our workforce and will account for as many as seven out of 10 workers by 2025, but they also currently represent 35% of workers without digital skills and 20% of those with limited digital skills

How do we close this digital divide to ensure that the Hispanic community has greater access to acquiring these skills and – ultimately – to these good-paying jobs?

In March, as part of our partnership with SXSW EDU, WorkingNation pulled together a panel to explore this critical question.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

Welcome to WorkingNation's, *Closing the Hispanic Digital Skills Gap*.

I am John-Carlos Estrada, I am with CBS Austin, the Morning News anchor. So, my day starts at 4:30 in the morning. Luckily, I took a nap before this, so I'm all rested.

And then, also we're going to have some Q and A at the very end, about 10, 15 minutes towards the end of the conversation. So, let me go ahead and introduce our panelists, our experts on this topic.

We have Domenika Lynch. She is the executive director of the Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program. Next to her, we have Frankie Miranda. He is the president and CEO of the Hispanic Federation. That is the nation's premier Latino nonprofit membership organization. And then, we have Hector Mujica, he is the Economic Opportunity Lead across the Americas for google.org, which is Google's philanthropic arm as well. So, thank you for being here.

So, I want to start with... The topic again, is Closing the Hispanic Digital Skills gap, why this issue is so important, and kind of lay the framework for this conversation.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

Sure, sure. So, delighted to be here, want to thank WorkingNation and Hector Mujica for inviting me and honored to finally meet the famous Frankie Miranda. Wonderful work that you're doing with Hispanic Federation. So, when you look at the demographics, right, in terms of who Latinos are in the United States, 18% of the population; and so young. Over 50% of Latinos are younger than 35. So, when you think about the future workforce, it is completely tied to that.

Now, when the pandemic hits and we start understanding what that workforce looks like in this country, and you see that the essential work and the essential workers tend to be Latinos and others, a lot of people of color, and underserved communities. What McKinsey said was because of the pandemic, the five sectors that were hardest hit, and a lot of businesses closed, those were tied to over 50% of the revenues of Latino businesses and 65% of the jobs that Latinos occupied.

The other reality with the pandemic is that there will be sectors that we are seeing now starting to disappear. Right? I won't lie. I walked into a bank and where are the tellers? There's no more tellers. People don't use the bank for deposits as much anymore, right? Another startling fact... And I encourage all of you to visit the McKinsey website, they have a report that they just unveiled. We were lucky to be their partner called the Economic State of Latinos in America. And they revealed that Latinos are underpaid by 288 billion dollars.

So, can you imagine? 288 billion dollars, and it's because of where we are when it comes to our occupations. It's a national emergency to be able to match this young workforce with the skills needed for the jobs of now and the future. Ginni Rometty, when she was at IBM, CEO, she said, "Those that make the technologies have the moral obligation to prepare those that are going to be impacted by it." So, this conversation is not just about Latinos. It's really about the state of our country.

As we sit here and we talk, there's a war happening and you are watching the news, telling you that cyber-attacks are going to be happening for sure. So where is that workforce? Right? So, I'm delighted to be here. I think there's a sense of urgency, but there's a lot of hope. There's a lot of desire to ensure that Latinos are occupying those roles in technology in the future. And also to be able to think of pathways, not only about digital fluency, but also about wealth creation. It's tied. Financial literacy and digital fluency are tied in terms of creating wealth in this country.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

I kind of want to do the same question for both of you about this topic. Why is it so important, especially with the organization that you represent?

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

Well, we have been... And thank you, Domenika, this was excellent introduction for this topic because we have been talking about this with the help of all the work of the Aspen Institute and all the conversations in the sector, talking about what is the future of Latino workers? And because of the amazing work of many of the Aspen Institute and others, we know that more than half of Latinos do not have adequate digital skills. And that is something that... It reminds me, and I'm going to date myself here a little, when I was finishing my undergrad, a professor told me, "Those without digital skills..." And this is in Puerto Rico in 1994. It's been a while. Yes. She said, "Not having digital skills will be like you are a functional illiterate." And that sounded so harsh in my head that I saved for a year and got my first computer.

I did not know how to use it, but I knew that it was important to start getting the ability to have access to this technology. But still, all of these years later, we still have an incredible amount of workers, Latino workers, that do not have access to the technology or the sufficient training. And of course, as Domenika mentioned, some of the sectors that our workers are focused on, on service, farming, meat packing, poultry workers, many of these jobs do not require some of these skills, but the world have changed in the last two years. And the concern is that many of them that suddenly are without a job, what is their chances of finding new career path? And it is so important, critically important, to have community-based organizations... And that is our approach. Community based organizations serve at those centers for digital scaling and workforce development.

These are the organizations that never closed their doors during the pandemic. These are organizations that provide wraparound services. And remember when the CDC director started coining the term for

vaccine access education, those trusted messengers in our communities are the community based organizations. So if I have provided you with food assistance, cash assistance, rental assistance, and I have provided you all these other services like English as a second language, or access to translations or any other services, these are the organizations that are well-positioned to provide these services in their community.

And I also want to add that we need to remember that our community has been made political targets by politicians, administrations, and there has been a sense of distrust when it comes to government resources. And we saw it during the pandemic when members of our community, they were vaccination sites or testing sites that were staffed by people in uniform. They were turning away. They were afraid about the narrative around the census or public charge or the elections. Our community has become scapegoats. And it is important that we use those community-based organizations as centers of trust that can connect all of the services from the private sector, from government, and from a community of care at large.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

Good afternoon. It's great to be with you all today, talking about this critical topic, and I'm so proud to be joined by such wonderful organizations alongside of us. So, just to put this into framing, we know that there's over 71 million people who lack traditional degrees; don't have a four-year degree education. To borrow the vernacular from our friends of Opportunity@Work, these are individuals I think called STARS. People that are skilled through alternate routes. They're now being skilled through a four-year degree through a two year associates. They're usually potentially leaning into a credentialing program or just gaining skills through regular work in the work field.

And for these individuals, we also know that there's a high percentage of these individuals who are BIPOC, who are individuals that are black, brown. In fact, BIPOC communities are disproportionately represented in the 71 million Americans who lack a traditional degree.

We also know that of these individuals who lack a traditional degree, they are four times more likely to have a job that could be replaced by automation. Now, we don't want to strike fear, Google.org and myself. We don't want to strike fear in the... Using the term of automation being a bad thing. I think automation inherently is a good thing. It's going to create greater efficiencies in society and the economy is going to increase the methodologies that we use to create products, it's going to lower costs, but we have to be incredibly intentional in how we design the economy to ensure that automation is not going to further divide and further widen the gaps that currently exist that have left historically underrepresented communities like the Latino community outside of pathways to opportunity.

To also underscore the points that my colleagues made, two thirds of jobs from 2010 on to 2030 are going to require either an advanced or medium level of digital skills for you to be able to enter into those jobs. When we're talking about digital skills, we're not talking about tech jobs. I'm not talking about jobs at Google, we're not talking about software engineering jobs. We're just talking about most roles in America will require a basic level of digital skills over the next couple of decades. And to the point that my colleagues were making, we know that Latinos make up about 18% of the population. And to Frankie's point, they make up over 50% of individuals who lack digital skills. So this underlines the gravity of the situation, and it underlies the importance of organizations like Google.org and others to be investing in both understanding the landscape, understanding the issues, which is the work that we have been supporting and funding with Domenika and the team at Aspen.

And also addressing the critical gaps that exist by bringing digital skilling proactively to Latino led, Latino serving organizations like the work that we've been supporting through the Hispanic Federation. And

ensuring that those digital skills are going to be paired up with adequate wraparound supports. We know that these populations are populations that have multiple barriers to opportunity. These are individuals that usually have to be working multiple jobs to be putting food on the table, or keep a roof over their heads. And we want to be ensuring an intentional to provide the right level of support to remove those barriers, so those individuals can adequately upscale, rescale, and ultimately participate in the digital economy.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

So, the next topic I wanted to talk about, and you've already touched on it a little bit, is the pandemic. Obviously, that's turned our world upside down over the last few years. I think you mentioned in a conversation prior to this, Domenika, that 2030 was sort of the goal when it came to having digital skills. Right? But the pandemic has really sped that up, that deadline of 2030. Why is that? And is there anything else that you guys want to mention about the pandemic.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

It does feel like all our lives, it was a combination of fast forward and then rewind. Didn't know which day was which when we were in lockdown. And I think during that time, the existing inequities just got worse, for sure, but because the pandemic required social distancing, all the companies really said, "It's time now to flip the switch and start automating." And as that happened, it started impacting jobs. And so, what McKinsey and quoting them again in their study, they had said one in four was at potential to lose their job... This was back in 2019, and they had predicted by 2030. And so, there was this emergency to already... We had 10 years to prepare, but it has really fast forward. And so now, the one thing I could say the crises has provided is sort of barriers coming down. People knowing that they have to work together.

And the challenge is so great that not one organization can work together. So, as you see the three of us here, it's the research component, the access to the networks necessary, the knowhow; also getting the direct resources and upskilling the curriculum that Hispanic Federation has done in the homes and individuals in terms of the sectors that are most affected, and certainly the funding that allows us to do that work. So, I am optimistic in that maybe it was the kick in the behind that we needed to already begin the digitalization process for our small businesses, for Latino owned businesses. I mean, you've seen it. Many have started relying more on social media. So much more, in fact, I love the Google commercials of, "We're open. You can pick up the food," that kind of thing. So, we're adapting, constantly adapting.

We see also individuals like nannies, who didn't have to worry about knowing technology, but now they had to turn on the computer and understand Zoom. Also paying their bills. Many of older Latinos relied on their younger, the children tend to be the broker of the culture. Right? But now suddenly they don't want them to look at their test results from the doctor, so they are now trying to figure out how to learn more than turn on the computer, but really get into the certain systems and pay online. So, it is this moment of crises, but it has accelerated the bad stuff, but also the desire to learn.

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

There is right now a sense of awareness that we didn't have before, at all levels. For people that are in the tech industry, from those that are in government, and those that basically recognize, "I couldn't help my child do remote learning." So, there is a sense of awareness across... And it's a great opportunity for us to be able to work with the historical investments that this crisis also had the federal government

with many of the rescue packages and the infrastructure bills, which we need to make sure that those investments are taking into consideration the needs of our communities of color.

Because the part that I am concerned is that while COVID pulled the curtain and force all of us to look at the disparities that we have been talking for years straight in the eye... You couldn't look away. You're home, you're watching all of this happening in front of you. There is a lot of people right now that want to pull the curtain back and say, "Let's go to pre-pandemic times." Well, we were not okay pre-pandemic. We were not okay. And we need to ensure that if we're going to have a recovery, a post-pandemic, it has to be fair and equitable, and it has to include our communities of color.

And that is why it is important that we all stay active in these type of topics and work with all of these organizations that are represented here with your local government and making sure that we are not repeating these mistakes over and over and that we continue to just go back to normal. There is a urge to go back to normal, but we should not have an urge to go to the same conditions that we were pre-pandemic.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

Yeah. The piece that I'll add to that is underlining Frankie's point, the pandemic did not create new conditions. I think the pandemic just uncovered existing conditions and it underlined existing conditions. And in many ways it accelerated many conditions of disparity and inequity that existed in society. And I'm hopeful that what's been seen, can't be unseen, and that we're aware enough now of the disparities that exist and that the challenges that are relevant and real, and that we'll work intentionally to solve for them.

One piece that does give me optimism to your point, Domenika, we did see a big acceleration on things like distance learning and remote education. And again, that did bring up new issues. Maybe not... It underlined existing issues around digital divide and lack of connectivity that exists in many BIPOC and Latino households. I think that helped prompt us as a society to pass a historic infrastructure bill that includes explicit dollars for broadband and connectivity. Right? And I think to me, that makes me optimistic and hopeful that we are taking steps in the right direction. I know that it's not a silver bullet. I know that it's not going to be the end-all be-all solution, but I'm optimistic that we're taking steps in the right direction. And as a society, that we are more conscientious about some of those disparities and are proactively aiming to address them.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

Well, you consider that in this country alone, there are over 500,000 jobs in cybersecurity and only 4% of Latinos are trained to fill those jobs. That's a problem. And when you look at the Latino business economy, small businesses that are not... They are very vulnerable because the attacks now may seem like it's sort of the big companies, but it will be the vulnerable companies as well. So I think that this is a moment in time where again, the awareness is growing, but it's about sourcing those solutions and understanding what the government resources are.

My greatest concern over federal investments is around the capital that gets deployed, won't reach the people that need it. And the reason for that is because we... The money is there, but there's a deployment problem from local municipalities who are not ready to receive that money and the contracts and the vendors that they use are people they know, and sometimes they're not the best characters in the community that have our people in mind. And so, we're at a tipping point and I think it takes a lot of voices in educating ourselves about what's really at stake, and that's for the Cares Act and the ARPA funding. And so, that's the work that we're trying to really understand.

Like, yes, all that money's coming down, trillions of dollars, but is it going to reach the people that need it the most? And if there's any funding for cybersecurity and job training, we have to make sure that we're there ready to deploy it to our communities.

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

It's, very true. I live in New York City and even the small bodega right now relies on some of these services with these apps where people can get their groceries delivered, and they have all of these connection now that, understanding it fully or not, they have to depend for their business model to survive, for the new reality. We know very well that people are going to continue to stay more at home.

That they're going to be more hybrid models for working, that people are going to be using technology even more. So, cybersecurity is a big concern because, then again, sometimes you need to just adopt a platform that you don't fully understand in order for your business to survive. But then again, what is that going to do? Do you have the ability to identify whether or not your database is compromised or not, or the information from your clients?

So, there's still a lot of advocacy that needs to happen not only on behalf of the small businesses, but also individuals. Our community has been traditionally targets of fraud and then, adopting new technologies at home too fast without the proper training, will also expose them even more; so, continue to be a concern. And again, the role of the organizations doing the education is critically important.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

And in my opinion, I think something else that's uniquely alarming around cybersecurity, and this is kind of building up on Domenika's point is, that the solutions are currently not being built by Latinos. And ultimately I think it's really important for underrepresented communities that are disproportionately impacted by breaches in cybersecurity and otherwise, to be active contributors and builders of the technology that's going to keep them and others safe. We see this not just in cybersecurity, but this is a problem throughout tech. I mean, again, we Latinos make up about 18% of the workforce, less than 8% of STEM jobs are Latino held. Right?

So I think there's big gaps, big disparities there, that we need to continue to be addressing. And it's not just about cybersecurity, but I think there's also another layer around misinformation and disinformation that uniquely exploits our community, that we need to be again, building solutions to address that. Not just consuming solutions that are made for mass audiences, that are not necessarily culturally appropriate or culturally in tune and going to ultimately resonate with our community. We need to be the creators of those solutions and the creators of those technologies, and I'm hopeful that this will be a call to action for folks.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

I do want to switch gears now and talk about some solutions that you guys are working on. But before I do, when WorkingNation contacted you to join the panel, I'm sure you have a personal anecdote that you could connect you with this topic. So at this point, if you want to share something with us that popped into your mind when you have this topic now about something that happened in your life that connected you to the digital divide?

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

For me it's, as you mentioned, my family. One, my family is in Puerto Rico. And we saw how after hurricanes Irma, Maria, in Puerto Rico, the reason why people were not able to... Many people didn't survive the aftermath of this natural disaster was because of lack of information, access to information, and because of the blackout that happened on the island and in many towns around the island. It lasted 12 months. It's the largest blackout in American history. And in New York, two days without electricity, and they want the head of the governor. Right? Imagine 12 months without it.

So, not having access to information and access to digital services was so life and death. And then, that repeated itself during the pandemic where people were not able to get basic access to healthcare or vaccines or lifesaving information. So, it is so critically important that we continue to work together to ensure that those situations never happen again. And it is about ensuring that people have the access, that the infrastructure is there to support those vulnerable communities. Our communities tend to live in areas that are vulnerable to climate change, and how we are going to create resilient communities. But it is not about how many poles we are going to have, or how many towers we're going to have, it is about how people can actually get the access to it.

At some point in Puerto Rico, when people were asking for desperate help from FEMA, the instructions were, "Go to the website and fill out the online application." But what happen if you don't have a computer, or you don't have electricity? So, that is some of the urgencies that we now understand that this no longer is a luxury, this is a necessity, and that lives depend on the work that we can do together. As it has been mentioned here, these solutions have to come from communities of color, it has to come from our communities and our advocacy. A lot of people don't want us to be involved in these issues. And they say like, "Well, just care for the poor, just care for other stuff. Technology that's way beyond us." It's like, "No, we need to be at the table at the moment that these decisions are made." And with the research that the Aspen Institute is doing, and the funding from firms like Google.org, we are able to give those tools to members in our community, through our network.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

I'd like to share, not a personal story, but I get inspired by the research that we do. And so, one of the organizations we contacted was the Austin Community College. So we talked about a grant that they had received from ARP, and it was really after they analyzed that the... It was a surge of those 50 and over, and it was women, and women who had divorced, had been homemakers or were widowed, or just because of the situation, just needed to get the skill set to find work again. And they also discovered a lot of them were Latinas, and sort of the fear of the digital, just the skillset, like even just starting a computer, because they didn't have to, but also the fear of, I need to figure out how to get a job and care for my family.

And how the university responded and how it was about meeting people where they are, and failing at it, actually. Because they've discovered, "Wait, we really don't have the kind of supports that they need." Do we have in language. The other was analyzing, why would they drop out? And a lot of it had to do with a mindset. You got to remember your math class and calculus, and suddenly you're like, "I'm terrible at math." And of course, you're not going to do well, but it's that same kind of mentality around technology. And in our community, it's kind of like, "That's not for me. That's for someone who went to college," and being that adept, it's very uncomfortable.

Not knowing a subject matter is just... You feel in the pit of your stomach. You feel out of sorts. So imagine for these communities now, it's like, everything's dependent on you figuring this out and you're terrified. The stress of it also inhibits the learning. So the university really figured out how to develop the curriculum, how to bring it in language, and if it was access to technology, there was free computers

they could check out. All the tools that they needed. And even when that wasn't working, it was, "Well, we need a Spanish translator." That was the first part. The second piece of it was also, "We need to have this course in Spanish."

And just by default, which this is what's so exciting that, as you fail at something you don't give up, but they also started recognizing, "Well, who else are we leaving out?" They were leaving out people with disabilities, they were leaving out people in the autism spectrum. They were also taking a look at other programs where many of these Latinas were getting their childcare certificate. And they discovered that they were taking up to 15 years to finish an AA degree; eight to 15 years. And the heartbreaking part is just to make \$8.

So they started to embed digital skills into the... You can manage a daycare center or own a daycare center. So I share that story because I think what stayed for me was they failed several times in getting it right, connect with the community, but they were listening. And learning is hard, so we have to have that compassion and we have to meet people where they are. And it's not that they're stupid, or it's not that they can't, it's that they're afraid. And I just applaud that and the community college is doing... You guys have an amazing community college here. And their research is one of the stories that we'll tell in the report coming out next year.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

The story that I'll share, I think we've been talking a lot about using a deficit framing for people that are lacking skills, and I think that's relevant for a lot of people in the Latino community. I think there's also a lot of people that have the skills and those skills are not recognized. I think that's kind of the angle that I want to go at this story through, which is the story of one of my uncles. One of my tios, my dad's brother, who, he had familial obligations that took him away from the opportunity of getting a four year degree early on in life. And he struggled to uphold a career. Right? He kept getting declined. He started working in retail. Then he got some experience in the IT sector.

And it wasn't until he finally got a break, someone believed in the fact that... Someone saw him for the skills that he had in IT and the digital skills and the technology skills that he had, and give him a job as an IT specialist, and then he kind of went up from there. But someone had to believe in the fact that he had that skill set and not seen for the deficit of not having a four year degree or an institutional pedigree. Right?

I think that was transformational for him and his life and the life of his family. I think in many ways we want... Where we also need to work to make sure that, that story is not an outlier, to make sure that individuals who do have those skill sets, those skills can be recognized, they can be translated, they can be acknowledged, and those individuals can be given an opportunity to also participate in the economy.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

Yeah. I do want to show your video, Hector. So is that a good segue...

**GOOGLE VIDEO AUDIO**

**Clarissa, Knowledge House graduate:**

When I was comparing myself to these other people that have gone to college and they probably have master's or even PhD in my field, I felt intimidated. If there's a problem, can I really solve it as good as

they can? I grew up in Mexico. I came here when I was 12 to live with my mom and my sister. I came from a very small town, no resources, no really formal education.

**Jerelyn Rodriguez, Knowledge House co-founder:**

Knowledge House is a nonprofit based in the South Bronx, and we provide code and design job training to youth and young adults coming from low income communities.

**Clarissa, Knowledge House graduate:**

My best friend, she's the one that told me like, "Hey, I think you're very good at this and I think this program will really fit you." For me the Knowledge House is like a home and they help unlock a talent that you didn't even know you had.

**Jerelyn Rodriguez, Knowledge House co-founder:**

I started the Knowledge House because I wanted to make sure that people who look like me and people from my community weren't left out of the innovation economy.

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

And that is why the Federation was created in 1990 to make sure that these organizations that are doing extraordinary job in their communities have the technical assistance and the funds to increase their capacity.

**Jerelyn Rodriguez, Knowledge House co-founder:**

Clarissa is so committed. She has inspired me. She, herself has grown tremendously.

**Clarissa, Knowledge House graduate:**

They teach not only digital skills and technology, but they also teach you how be confident in yourself. Even if a guest [inaudible] is okay, I'll deliver, I can be a developer. My name is Clarissa, and I am a data engineer.

**RETURN TO THE PANEL**

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO**

I have to say to you guys, I met Clarissa and her enthusiasm and her hope for her future is contagious. I think that here for the video, she was a little timid and shy, but meeting her is so bubbly and she's smiling and she has a new perspective in life, just because these organization that we're able to support, thanks to the great and general support of Google.org... And thank you Hector, for believing in us, in our network, that we could do this. It's going to make a complete different life for her, her family, and everybody that she can influence around her.

We have seen through this program, that again... We started this commitment before the pandemic, but during the pandemic we continue it, and we were concerned about whether it was going to be a success, but we were actually... We have been able to through this program train more than 12,000 individuals, it have resulted in more than 1300 jobs, more than a hundred new businesses. We have seen increases in earnings for many of these people in the lower end, up to \$18,000, more of what they

used to earn. And on the higher end, when we're talking about the tech jobs, up to \$79,000, this is wealth in communities of color. This is access. This is opportunity.

And again, she is the perfect example, and I'm so happy that we have been able to help Clarissa and so many others to fulfill their potential, the potential that they didn't know that they had, and that just this opportunity and access have changed their lives as a first generation here in the United States and their siblings and other family members. So, I'm super proud of the work of the research, the support, and the working together. Because again, we have to make these opportunities happen for our communities.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

And what I really like about the Clarissa story is that it puts a spotlight on a Latina because we know that Latinas are even more disproportionately impacted by displacement from jobs, displacements from automation, displacements as a result of the pandemic. And even in tech, right, we know there's also not just a racial gap, but there's also a gender gap that plays a factor in here as well, around women being able to have the confidence and the belief to be able to see themselves in the roles and the spaces that they can, should and must occupy. And to me, it's also just really inspiring to see the story of Clarissa and to see this person that came here against a lot. Someone that came here to a new country to learn a new language and how she leaned into that strength, because let's be very clear, being an immigrant is an asset, not a deficit. And she was able to lean into that strength and develop a career for herself as a developer, as an analyst and this technologist. And I'm hopeful that we'll be able to replicate that story tenfold.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

I'm really hopeful too, but having worked at a university for 10 years at the University of Southern California, I was head of the Latino Alumni Association. One of the frustrations I had was how hard we work, how much we get scholarships, how much we go into debt, and then when it's time to graduate and get that job, right? What we found in our research that even when Latinas get a computer science degree, there're still making an average of \$65,000 compared to a white male that's making a 100 to 120 to start. So when that happens, then the dream of this education and being in computer science, that was the barrier. You realize, "Oh no, that was one of the barriers." Right?

And so, for the professionals, so we've talked a lot about the essential worker, but when we get sort of this pipeline of college graduates in those majors, then what is it like to get into the roles in the companies? And those are the pieces that we have conversations, because if you don't have access to the right connections... So certainly you do need the capacity in yourself. Right? You need capital funding to get through college, but you also need those networks. And that's why the Aspen Institute, I accepted the role here, because it is those networks that we have not been privy to before. Where you can go to an event like this and that one person that was impressed by you, can open the door and sponsor you.

So, in the research that we've done, Latino ERGs or employee resource groups, are one way for Latinos to get noticed, but the responsibility also falls on the corporation to make sure it's not just the tokenism, but it's an opportunity to be sponsored by someone that's in senior management, because that will make the difference in being able to move up the roles. Right now, Latinos are only 2% of... If I get this right, 2% of leadership roles on boards, but also when it comes to funding for our startups. So we're... I mean, the numbers are so dismal compared to who we are in terms of a population. So, lot of work to do, but that takes us coming together and just having a louder voice.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

I do want to carve out a couple minutes for Q and A. So if we want to try to get a mic, does anyone have any questions out there?

**Monica, University of California Riverside student:**

So, hi. My name is Monica. I go to UCR, so I'm from California. I work with undocumented students. I'm an undocumented student, myself. I'm a senior, so I'm set to graduate this June. And one question, I've been super interested in helping the community and stuff, but as a college student, my question is, how can you make change when you don't have the resources or just the funding yet? And then, a follow up question is, what is one piece of active advice that we can practice in our communities? Even if we don't have the idea of having in startup or anything else, just active advice that we can do to make change in our community?

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

I believe empowerment. You feel empowered when you have choices. I think that as a community, we're a really proud community. We got the power of will. This is why you're finishing school even though you're an undocumented student, because it's really not a limit unless you let your mindset be a limit, right? When it comes to what you can do personally, I think be proactive, plugging into the networks. So it could be other students that are also concerned about the digital divide. It could be... Because that's what I did. I'll tell you. I was a first generation student. I was a teen mom and it just seemed like it was never going to end to get to the other side. Right? But I persisted. And so, that's going to be the key.

And I had such a hunger to serve my community, that nothing was going to stop me. And as long as I just stayed fixed with that, and then I asked a lot of questions. I showed up to events like you're doing and I asked for people's business card. You know how many times I give a business card, people never call me. Now you don't even need a business card. You can find me on LinkedIn. Right? But that's how you plug in. Because once you're part of the network, then things will start shifting. The right people will show up in your life, and I'm a testimony to that. My son is an engineer. He's done well, he's a good person, most importantly, but it was hard as hell. It was hard. I won't lie to you, but you're already finishing. Once you finish, then nothing will be this hard.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

Yeah.

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

I think that you being here and asking these questions is an incredible step towards a bright future for you, for many students in the same situation. I think that we are at a historical time in which your voices are being heard, that there is real advocacy behind all dreamers and access to more than ever the stories of how dreamers and undocumented people were part of these first responders that were so uniquely, life saving jobs, or the ones that allowed many of us to stay home. And while they were risking their lives, we have a unique opportunity right now to mobilize.

And there are many organizations, especially in California, that are actively working at the local and the national level to continue these conversation, even if we have a Congress that cannot get along and cannot get a lot of things moving, but there is a unique opportunity right now. We need to hear more voices like you. So, thank you so much for sharing and for being here. And again, if you want contact

with organizations near you, more than happy to talk to you and also to people from my team to connect you.

**Bernardo Gonzalez, ed-tech startup founder:**

Hello, my name is Bernardo Gonzalez. I'm from Mexico City. I am an ed tech startup founder, developer, programmer. So, I work a lot with accessibility and inclusion in Mexico. So, I would like to ask what's happening here in terms of collaborating with ed tech to solve all of these issues? And I also wanted to know if there's any collaboration with other countries to deal with the problems that you're dealing here with Latino communities?

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

One thing that we see a lot in our work, in my line of work, and I have... My line of sight is across America, right? So I do look after our work in Latin America as well as our work in the US. And I've been really encouraged to see the amount of fantastic talent that is coming out of Latin America, and the amount of idea generation innovation that is coming out of the region. A region that has historically been similarly to the Latino community in the US, been underinvested in and underbelieved in. So, I've been really encouraged to see some of the momentum that we've seen across the region. I've also been encouraged to see a greater sense of collaboration between funders and investors that are keen in investing in solutions, that are not trying to tackle this as a one size fits all solution, whatever works for US Latinos also works for Latin American people; and whatever works for people in Latin America also works for US Latinos.

That used to be the mentality, not too long ago. Right? Not too long ago, used to be, "Let's take the whatever website in Mexico and let's serve that to US Latinos." I think we're beginning to get to a place, we have gotten to a place, where we are more aware and conscious of the cultural nuances and therefore can be serving individual segments of the community more thoughtfully, more intentionally, and in a way that it's more culturally appropriate and hopefully will yield better outcomes.

I've also seen us do tremendous learning from ed tech organizations. Part of our portfolio includes organizations in Latin America like Laboratoria, that has been a fantastic Latina led women, led movement across Latin America; because it has been a movement to get more women that are lacking a four year degree access to the right set of digital and technical skills, the right wraparound supports, and then placing thousands of women into technical roles across Latin America. So, that's just one organization that I can point to that I think has been doing tremendous work and we've been able to borrow certain segments of their model and bring it over to the US. And so, I think to me, that's also a big signal that, "Hey, there's such great innovation happening in the region that we can be learning from and borrowing some best practices from." So yeah, so all that to say, we're seeing greater collaboration, greater investment across regionally, and I find that encouraging.

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

So Aspen Institute, we have Aspen Mexico. So they do again the same... It's a think tank. Although we like to call ourselves a think and do tank because we do want to change, turn those ideas into action. But Aspen Mexico, for example, they have a community there. Endeavor is another. Have you heard of Endeavor as well? I'm seeing a lot of opportunities for investments in Latino tech startups in LinkedIn. Maybe I'm the right algorithm because I get to see all of them. They follow me now, but I would encourage you to visit our website. So Aspen Latinos, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program.

We give scholarships to Latinos to participate in Aspen Institute programming. So these are very expensive tickets to go to Aspen, Colorado and spend three days, but it's a curated room with leaders from all over the country, sometimes all over the world. But those are the spaces that you may meet somebody that could certainly maybe invest in your company, but happy to connect afterwards as well. I think it's asking the question and seeing who shows up.

**Ben Hima:**

Ben Hima from Williams Works. I had a question for Frankie. The Hispanic Federation, you guys have done a lot of work over the last couple decades, just a lot of success. I'm sure that you guys have had programs that may not have gone so well. How have you taken the lessons of things that haven't gone well and applied them to new programs in other aspects of your organization?

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO:**

Thank you for the question. I think that the key is to listen to the network of organizations. We are created by and for nonprofit organizations that are doing the work in communities. We are a capacity builder, we are coalition builder, when there is an organization that is on record on an issue, we elevate those. We incubate, we listen to the solutions of the sector, and we try as much as possible to come up with solutions.

What we do is that we are constantly surveying and listening to the feedback from the community, what is through the network to the community-based organizations. When something is not working and we need to fine tune, it is through consensus, it is through bringing them to the table, and finding out why this is not working. The fact is that if there is an issue, most likely there is an organization in our own network that is working on that issue. You always have to be reprogramming and be ready and be very courageous to just be ready to act.

I feel... Then I don't know if it is because we are from New York, we were born and raised in New York, and everything in New York is really, really fast. I think that everybody in the sector in the ecosystem has its own timing. Right? And it's respected and it's okay. But for us, the time is now. And that is why when we heard from our network that we really need the numbers from the official government to know where were people dying during this pandemic, that it was in our community, was because our agencies were talking directly to us. And we were now trying to impose on them solutions. We were saying, "What you need to be effective in your community?" If it is in the rural area, it's not going to be the same as the Latinos in urban areas in Washington Heights, in New York.

So we need to make sure and always pivot and be able to do that, and also have straight conversations with our funders. When we started this program, we did not envision that there was going to be one in a hundred year pandemic. And we were always envisioned that this training workforce development program with Google.org was going to be in person. But when all of these organizations needed to shift, we had conversations with Hector and his team, and we basically said, "We need to find new solutions for this." And then there were organizations in New York that went to the houses of each one of the participants to set up the internet and give them the computer and be able to participate.

Others, they decided that they were going to have some sort of hybrid approach to it. But it is about making sure that you have transparent and honest conversations, not only with the network, but also your funders and being able to be brave and to take those decisions at a real time. I think that our experience dealing with natural disasters in the past and emergency relief allows us to have the tolerance to shift in short notice. But that is only because we're responding not to what we think is the solution, but what is the solution that is provided by the community through the network.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

So, we only have about five minutes left, so I want to go through our panelist and ask a call for action. You have to leave something for this audience to do with this topic, the digital development in community. What is that one thing?

**Domenika Lynch, Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program executive director:**

The work that we're doing is around ecosystem building, and so that's how I work now. I don't think, "Oh my, I only have X number of staff," and we have four. Right? But I have so many volunteers, and so I activate them because you lead by inspiration, influence. Right? There's something that this other person also wants to join you with, and then you start building your army of support. So, I really believe that so much is possible because we saw that happening in the pandemic. Right? This is why we all love Chef Andres because that's what he does. He just shows up. So I would just say, show up, plug into a network, and it's about inspiring others to follow your lead.

**Frankie Miranda, Hispanic Federation president & CEO**

I will say that you need to call your local elected official. You need to make sure that you are lobbying and talking to your local elected official, because many of these investments that we have been talking about that are going to change lives, is going to happen with the local government. We all think about the sexiness of presidential elections and all of these races and everything, but these decisions are going to be taken by local elected officials; your assembly member, your senators, your city council members, different counties. They are going to make the decision about billions of dollars that are going to impact you, your family and your communities.

So, still, it's very powerful when they see the phone ringing and people calling and showing up to the public hearings and sending that email and participating and being active. They really pay attention, and we need to do that more in our community. As an organization, also focus with civic engagement. It is really, really important to inform the community about these issues, but also activate them and eventually, showing up to vote. But in the meantime, there's nothing more that, that local elected official fears more than those phones ringing. So, you need to be active and be able to just lobby for the community that you belong to or that you serve.

**Hector Mujica, Google.org head of Economic Opportunity, Americas:**

And I have two. One is for funders or people that work in companies in the room that have influence over funders. We need to be funding more Latino led, Latino serving organizations; full stop. We need to be... Only 1% of philanthropy goes to Latino led, Latino serving. And that's just unacceptable. That's 1%. So, if you're a funder, if you have influence over funders, if you sit on boards of foundations, that is something that we can all be doing to hold those in power accountable, is encouraging higher dollars going to organizations like the ones represented here on stage to support this meaningful, powerful work.

Like what Frankie was saying earlier about how in tune they are with their network and listening and getting that two way feedback loop, that is why it's so important for us to be funding Latino led, Latino serving because they have the trust of the community. They are in tune with what the community needs, and ultimately that is how we're going to be best serving the community at large.

The second call to action for operators or for individuals that are running programs to train and upskill and reskill individuals, is lean into culturally appropriate content and digital skills programming. I think you're going to have to work twice as hard if you're trying to push out content that is not culturally

relevant, that is not... Whether you're trying to target a population with a certain language, right? If you're trying to target them in Spanish or with people that look like them, if there's video content or visual content, I think it's just incredibly important for that content to be reflective of the communities we're trying to reach.

Again, to the point that was made earlier, we need for people to be able to see themselves reflected in these spaces, and I think it's just incredibly important for us to be taking that bold step and making sure that whatever content we're putting out into the world is reflective of the communities that we're reaching.

**John-Carlos Estrada, CBS Austin anchor:**

Right. So, I think that is our time. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you to WorkingNation for putting this together and SXSW EDU.

**Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:**

You've been listening to Work in Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, editor-in-chief of WorkingNation.