

BACKGROUND

The Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is an independent, nonpartisan public policy think tank based in New York that describes itself as “a catalyst for smart and sustainable policies that reduce inequality, increase economic mobility, and grow the economy in New York City.”

CUF is planning to publish a blueprint for New York City’s post-COVID economic recovery and is currently seeking input and ideas from a range of NYC-based stakeholders, including: business executives, economists and economic development officials, educators, leaders of community-based organizations, labor officials, fiscal experts, philanthropic leaders, urban planners, faith-based leaders, artists, and many other experts from across the city’s economy.

In their conversations with these stakeholders, they are looking for concrete ideas — for strategies, policies, initiatives, and projects that New York policymakers should pursue to spark an economic recovery in NYC and help make the city’s economy stronger and more inclusive over the long run.

PROPOSED TALKING POINTS

OCMPA has prepared a few key talking points for your interview with Jonathan Bowles, the Executive Director of CUF. These points were pulled from your past writings and from previous conversations with you, and they may be helpful to guide your conversation with Jonathan. We have included some general, top-level points as well as very specific suggestions that Jonathan can take away from the conversation for potential inclusion in the CUF blueprint.

Top Message:

In order to build back better, NYC should invest in shaping the new, post-COVID normal in two ways: leveraging *homegrown* talent and brokering corporate investment through public/private partnerships.

HOMEGROWN TALENT

KEY POINT: The City has a role to play in connecting homegrown talent to the businesses — both large and small — that require their knowledge and expertise. The City needs to play matchmaker whenever it can.

- The people that New York City needs to both lead and enable the City’s economic recovery were born, raised, and educated — and continue to live — right here.
- Many of them attend CUNY schools, and after graduation, they typically stay here in New York and find jobs in leadership positions in any number of industries.
 - New York is home to many prestigious institutions of higher education — not all of their graduates are as likely to remain in New York as CUNY grads are.
- Any immediate economic development and recovery initiatives should seek to leverage this homegrown talent, and center it, providing employment opportunities to New Yorkers.
- Baruch is training the workforce for the future — those who will be building the City’s financial, technological, and cultural infrastructure, those the City needs to lead the recovery.

- My recent conversations with business and civic leaders have helped me recognize that we are surrounded by hundreds of small businesses and community organizations that are teetering on the edge of survival. They need assistance and insight that match the expertise within CUNY's and Baruch's institutes and centers, and faculty and our students — from strategy, to marketing and technology; they also need guidance in interpreting policies and understanding social dynamics.
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CORPORATE INVESTMENT THROUGH PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

KEY POINT: The City must invest in brokering more partnerships like the New York Jobs CEO Council.

- Part of building back is ensuring a level of equity in the recovery — ensuring that all New Yorkers share the benefits of a stronger and more resilient economy in the post-COVID world.
- Public education plays an important role in enabling equitable outcomes for New Yorkers.
- And we must grapple with an inconvenient truth: public higher education not only benefits students, it also creates innovation and economic prosperity, and it benefits corporate America by preparing a diverse knowledge-workforce that is in great demand.
- And yet, taxpayers — and increasingly students themselves — are bearing the bulk of the financial burden.
- We rarely discuss public higher education as a form of positive externality in our society, and corporate America is very much on the receiving end of it.
- A win-win proposition is for corporate America to work proactively and to invest strategically with public colleges and universities — partnering to educate a diverse and innovative workforce of tomorrow.
- Indeed, many businesses are beginning to make steps in the right direction. Bank of America, as part of a \$1 billion commitment to advancing racial equality, donated \$1 million each to 21 (primarily public) higher education institutions, including Baruch College.
- The recently launched New York Jobs CEO Council — a partnership between CUNY, the NYC Department of Education, and 27 private sector CEOs to expand economic opportunities to underserved New Yorkers — is also a strong example of the way forward.