

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.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Joining me on the Work in Progress podcast is Antonio Tijerino, president and CEO of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, a national nonprofit focused on education, workforce, social impact, and culture. Antonio, thank you for joining me.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

It's a pleasure to join you. Thanks for having me.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I'm very excited to talk to you because even in your own mission statement, you talk about education and workforce, and of course, that is something that WorkingNation is really interested in and what we really want to get out there to our audience. So give me kind of an overview of what you're doing at the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, and then we'll dive in a little bit.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Absolutely, and I'm glad you picked up on that because those are two of the pillars of our organization are workforce development education. A lot would say that education is workforce development the first place because, ultimately, what you're trying to do is build towards the rest of your life and what you're going to do with that education. For instance, in education, we teach 100,000 students how to computer code, and everything we do, Ramona, is adaptable. So, at what point, do we switch to AI?

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

But we have the infrastructure to go in a lot of different directions where we talk about computational thinking as part of it. So it's broader than just simply trying to teach a bunch of kids how to code, trying to give them confidence with technology, feel a sense of belonging in technology, for instance, and also make sure we're building social capital at every step. So, at some point, there's a Ramona that knows an Antonio as they go into their careers and have that touch point.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

On the workforce development part, we're working with AT&T, for instance, in terms of skills building all over the country for youth, but also for people that are currently in a particular job and want to transition into another job. That skills building is going to help them. Same with IBM. We want to make sure that they have access to not just tools but also certifications and access to a career path in areas that we need to fulfill. And the reason for that, Ramona, is because 78% of all new jobs will be taken by a Latino over the next seven years. That's according to Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

So almost eight out of 10 new jobs will be fulfilled by a Latino. We want to make sure that our community is in good position as they move into those, that they're in the skilled areas, that they're in the technology areas that they're in, the future jobs that America needs for us to fill because we have a

value proposition as Latino community, and we want to make sure that we're prepping our community to provide that value proposition in the workforce. And education, of course, is the first huge step in that.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And social impact is also another pillar that it's very important that we're able to work with a mutual friend of our friend, Carlos Ignacio, for instance, Carlos Herrera, who we incubated and started Pay Your Interns that now every intern that works on Capitol Hill or in Washington, DC gets paid. Those are areas that you lose sight of in terms of economic impact and generational wealth building. Sometimes, it starts as an intern. My daughter just had one where you want to make sure that you're also seen as valuable because somebody is valuing that work that you're doing.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And then culture permeates through everything we do. We want to make sure that cultural pride, cultural inspiration, cultural demonstration is part of everything that we do. We want to make sure that all of those pieces are in place in terms of the mission that we have. And our mission, I called a malleable mission, because it should adapt to the needs and wants of our community, our country. And the third thing is that it's something cool that we do, and we do a lot of cool stuff.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I just hosted a panel at JFF Horizons in July, and it was on the Hispanic digital skills gap. And a couple of numbers that really struck me were that 92% of all jobs now require some kind of digital skill, and then over 50% of Latinos have low to moderate digital skills.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

So that puts a disadvantage already. So, just as you said, 78% of the new jobs over seven years are going to be filled by Latinos-Hispanics. What kind of training are you doing? What kind of work are you doing very specifically to make sure that gap is closed?

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Let me just add even before you can have those skills when you are quoting some of this divide, digital divide, it starts with access to wifi. It starts with access to a device. And we have found through surveys that we did with the Student Research Foundation that Latinos were most likely to say that their grades suffered because they didn't have wifi at home to do their homework. Most likely to say that they couldn't finish their homework. Parents were most likely to say they couldn't communicate with a teacher because they didn't have wifi at home.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And I'm going to quote our wonderful FCC chair, Jessica Rosenworcel, who has supported our programs over the years when she talks about a homework gap that then leads into a workforce gap. So I just want to take a step back and talk about there's a digital divide that continues in this country that we saw get even broader during COVID when you had to be able to learn at home or you had to be able to work at home, and you had all these people living in the same place. I know, in my house, it became a problem.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And if you don't have access, especially in the rural areas where you have a double whammy of being Latino and being in rural areas and Latinos are the fastest growing in rural areas. So we want to make sure that everybody's connected first because you can't succeed in education or in the workforce or in community building if you don't have access to wifi. And in terms of the work that we're trying to do, it is partnering with IBM and being able to take what's already out there. I think programs and approaches need to be created, but the actual platforms and curricula have been created.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

They just need to be used. They're gathering virtual dust somewhere when somebody really smart came up with yet another curricula for skills building or access for free in Spanish for a Latino community to be able to further their education or get credentialed. So that's when they need a Hispanic Heritage Foundation and other organizations to be able to connect with the community and provide these tools that you need. So we work with IBM on something that they have in place, the SkillsBuild program that they've had in place. We want to make sure that our community has access to it.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And confidence gap is something else that happens in the technology space, and especially for Latinas. So we want to make sure that we have that part of it in place too. And a sense of belonging and building community in the technology and some of these other areas. And we're also doing it with IBM, with Google, and all these other companies that actually have these certifications in place. They just need access to the community. And we're a trusted partner and a trusted part of the community as well that are going to feel comfortable going into these areas. But it's critical, and it's critical for, again, our country, not just our community.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I was struck in many of the conversations that I've had, and not just with the Hispanic-Latino community, but also in all communities that there are a lot of great programs out there, but there's a lack of awareness at times.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

That's right.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And then an organization like yours can help bridge that gap being that trusted community partner and be able to reach people where they're at.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

That's the key. And it's working with schools, and it's working with community centers, and it's working with recent arrivals that are mostly in the south because that's the other thing, Ramona, is that there's this focus on where the glut of our community is as opposed to where it's growing. And I want to make sure that we're also all over the south, and in the Midwest and other areas that there's a growing community as well as the areas where we are. And that includes in the rural areas too.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

So we want to make sure that our farmworker community, that their children are able to benefit from the amazing journey that their parents had and from that work ethic and from that... everything that gets passed down to provide that economic mobility. And that's something else that really bothers me when I talk to a whole lot of people in that space of economic development and they don't always have workforce development, and education or healthcare as part of economic mobility, and it's critical to it. You want to deal with housing issues, get someone a better job that's going to help housing issues. And you have a healthier community. It means you have a stronger workforce.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

The mental health part is critical right now as well. And you want to make sure that you have people that understand that it's a new landscape in terms of the workforce playing field. And we had a workforce revolution without marches and without a lot of organizing. It was individuals during COVID that decided to change how they were going to engage with their employers and how employers were going to engage with their workers. And I think it's all leveling out a little bit, but it still shifted towards the workers without anyone really recognizing that it was an absolute revolution that we just witnessed.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I totally agree with you, and you talk about the rural community. Interesting thing that I've heard in conversations is that the rural communities, there's a lot of people moving out of them because there are no jobs and there's no workforce development there.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And there's this new revitalization by trying to bring in some workforce development to those areas. And with the Latino population growing there, I find that pretty interesting that they're growing.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Let me ask you, Ramona, because I'd love to get your thoughts on this too. I was just in San Jose. San Jose is a very different place than it was five years ago. And then, I would go outside of San Jose in terms of some of the surrounding areas. And it was a very different place than it was five years ago. And I remember there was a shift, and in certain areas, like in Washington, DC, everybody's still moving towards the city, but there is a movement in San Francisco, in San Jose, and a lot of other areas that people are moving outside because of the cost.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And it's a real problem because it's changing how these beautiful historic cities are being inhabited. Sometimes, it's empty, and the energy and the spirit and the culture is leaving some of our great American cities. And where the Latino community goes, usually it's because there's employment somewhere. I think that would be an interesting trend for people to look at in certain cities.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And then other problems happen where businesses closed down because there aren't many... as many people working there where you have other issues, social issues that are happening because there are no jobs. So I couldn't emphasize more, and I know I'm preaching to the choir right now, but the role of workforce development and education before that and during and beyond is critical to economic mobility and economic sustainability in this country.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Yeah, we're doing a series just to share with everyone, and we started again a couple of months ago called Focus On, where we're looking at different communities around the country and talking about what they are doing to make sure that the population stays there or even grows. And we have been focusing on more mid-size. We could talk about LA, we could talk about Chicago, we could talk about New York, which we are going to do in some videos in the next couple of months.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

But on the article side, we've done some Zoom interviews with the mayors, and what we're seeing is that where there has been some growth, businesses are coming in and saying, "Let's partner so we can make sure the workforce that you have is being trained for the jobs that we have with that very idea is how do we keep people here? How do we keep them?" But then you do have to figure out the housing part. It's not in a vacuum. It can't just be-

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

No. No.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

... about the jobs. The housing is a really big issue. I live in Los Angeles. I lived in New York for 20 years. I just went and looked in Zillow because my daughter had talked about maybe moving to New York, and then looking at the prices in LA, I was stunned at the cost to live in Manhattan or Queens or Brooklyn now.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

It was just stunning. I live in LA. I'm paying half of what they're paying for more room. So how do you keep people in a community that has a lot of jobs, or is the possibility of a lot of jobs? I think that's a problem that we need to solve for everyone.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

But they do go hand in hand. I think you just said it. My point was that part of it is workforce development and jobs. It's not alone. You can't handle one without the other. And I think you reinforce that because you can't take a job in a place that you can't afford to live, but you can't afford to live in that place if you don't have a job that allows you to live there.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

So everything has to go hand in hand. I just don't like it when it gets left out of a conference on economic development, and they're not talking about the workforce development piece and adapting to the needs of the workforce today instead of trying to catch up to what it was 10 years ago or five years ago. And these days, a year ago, everything's changing. And you have to be able to adapt.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And that's where I'm grateful to our partners that are able to invest in our community, knowing if you're looking at the workforce right now, or even the educational community right now, I think it's almost 27% of all students are Latino across the country. And if you can't get your head around what the

workforce is going to look like and where the investment needs to be in order to help your industry in order to help the country, then you're being myopic in terms of how you were doing things.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I agree that workforce development is a key to job creation. And another area that is key that we have seen is entrepreneurship. And every year, we look at the Stanford Latino Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Yeah, love them.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I love them, love their report. And it shows that the Latino workforce, and particularly Latina, are starting more companies, small businesses, but those are the backbone of a community. You build something in your neighborhood, and you can employ people. You can employ one or two, or you can employ 50. So I think the entrepreneurship angle that you guys are looking at, I think, is very an important part of our whole economic mobility system.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Absolutely, and I can send you some statistics that underline everything that you're doing, including how many jobs are created by Latino entrepreneurs. And in terms of if you... The quickest way to independence is to start your own business, and when you're coming over here from another country, I don't care if it's someone that's selling flowers in the median strip in LA or if it's somebody that's opening a bakery or if it's somebody that is a content creator or somebody that's doing IT services or working as a consultant, it is critical that we are able to support small businesses.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And we have a program with TikTok called Creciendo con TikTok, where we're trying to say, "You need to have a TikTok strategy in terms of growing your business because it's free and it actually drives foot traffic," and we have the data to provide for that. And how do you get creative about how you promote your businesses with a bottom line to it? Or when you have somebody that's a content creator, which riddles our consciousness these days, and you're like, "How do they make money at this?"

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

But they're making money at having a social media presence, and as they monetize it, they immediately become small business owners, micro, small business owners. Even it's just them, but they have to figure out the tax part of it, all of the different elements in terms of reinvesting, and be able to hire someone that's doing some of the backend work of the work that they're doing. So they're business people as well as content creators, and they need the additional resources. So I just did an internship with the SBA administrator, Isabel Guzman, and she was just terrific. You should have her on your...

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I have.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Oh.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I love her.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Isn't she great?

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

She's great.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Out of LA.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Yeah. I interviewed her at the Aspen Latino and Business Summit. She was great.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

She's fabulous.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Yeah.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

I'm so glad you did. And I had her on my podcast, and she laid out basically a vision to go forward for entrepreneurship. I love that you have somebody that one of the most traditional sectors, which is small business, and she's constantly looking forward in terms of where is it going to go. How can we support the new small business owners?

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And when we do our surveys, Ramona, among our youth, entrepreneurship, ranks at the top of their aspirations ultimately. So I don't care if it's a young person that's involved in tech, sustainability, whatever it is, they ultimately, for the most part, want to be an entrepreneur, whether it's through a startup in those spaces, but the entrepreneurship sector is the one that's really vibrant and constantly moving forward, and I'm thrilled that we have a leader like Isabel Guzman at the head of the spear.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I also noticed that you have this program called LOFT, which and you have that Latinas On Fast Track. I would love to understand how you're reaching these young women.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And young men too.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And young men too.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

So I... Yeah, it's called Latinos On Fast Track, Latinas On Fast Track, Latinx On Fast Track. Want to make sure that we're getting everyone on a fast track. So the program, actually, our ecosystem that we have in place, which again is very malleable and can go in a lot of different directions, it starts with our Youth Awards program that we've had for 25 years. So we get about 35,000 applicants. From those applicants, we select about 300, and they're broken out into cohorts of 30 in each of 10 tracks or categories, sectors, industries. When they're seniors in high school, juniors, and seniors in high school, they apply. After doing for 25 years, our network is over 350,000 vetted 15 to now 40-year-olds.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

From there, we're able to go into a lot of different directions, the mentoring piece within each other, building social capital, having access to career paths, and then we will then be able to move into a lot of different directions from, for instance, with ExxonMobil, we have placed hundreds of engineers with that company and every year we have so many leftover that we wish we had access to other companies that needed engineers because of this ecosystem that we've created where it's easy to draw from the talent because we've already engaged them from a young age, and then we do the development part, and then we do the placement, and then we pull them back in. Another example is what we've been able to do through a series called Hacking a Career.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

So we're able to say hacking a career in AI. We've done that in Hollywood in terms of the different jobs that exist within there in the tech industry, and we just did one on blockchain. So we can actually get very specific about different career paths because we've already got this mass of talent that we're just trying to give them guidance in terms of where they can go. We just did one with Freddie Mac, for instance, in that space, and so that's how the LOFT program works. It's also a leadership program. An example is we just hosted 300 students in San Antonio for a week-long leadership institute with Trinity University, and our friend Juan Sepúlveda over there that led it. Those students were able to connect with each other.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

We had students from Alaska, from Hawaii, from Puerto Rico, from Washington, DC, from Iowa, from Idaho, from Wyoming. I mean, they were from all over the country, and now they know each other, and they also are able to meet with people that are in career paths in those different tracks, including in education. Let's just talk about the diversity of issue that we have in all of these different pathways and careers, right. But it starts with education, and when you have 27% of students being Latino and about 9% are teachers that are Latino, there's a gap that no one really talks about that feeds every other diversity gap. Whether you're going into any career path, it starts with your connection to your teachers.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

We're trying to address all of those through the Latinos On Fast Track program, and it's everything from placing you into internships and full-time positions that we do constantly with our partners, including public and private sector as well as the nonprofit sector. And then it also works in a way of training, connecting, and making sure that they also have access to other resources and programs that our partner organizations are doing. We partnered with LBAN, and the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and our good friend Ramiro Cavazos over there on an effort with Wells Fargo, trying to create bigger supply side of Latinos on the supply side.



Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

And it was a great program where three organizations came together where we could pass off our talent to Ramiro, then pass it off for scale with our entrepreneurship friends over at Stanford, and that's the way it should work. We shouldn't do anything in a vacuum. Everything we do is designed to support what somebody else is doing. That's where the real value comes in.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

In the last few minutes we have here, I want to circle back around to this idea that the largest percentage of people entering the workforce or will be a part of the workforce in the next coming years will be Hispanic-Latino.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

This is important to our economy to make sure that everyone has had equal access had equal opportunity for advancement because we want everybody to rise up. We want everybody to have a good job. We want everybody to be able to be a part of the growth in our country and drive it. So I would just love some closing thoughts from you on that idea.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

Thank you for teeing that up for me as someone that obviously understands that value. I think it starts certainly with education, but also confidence. And a lot of these young people that we deal with are first in family to go to college. We want to make sure that they have that support as they go into their career path. I also think it's important for those that are already in the workforce that are able to pivot into these jobs, and that's where those partnerships, you have to be creative and innovative in these partnerships. That's why an IBM understands that.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

That's why a Google and AT&T and ExxonMobil understand that if you can access talent and they can get credentialed, they can grow within your system. And our job is to be able to be the connector between our community and some of these existing programs. The other part is the follow-up too, building social capital, understanding the importance of people being connected that aren't usually connected. Ramona and Antonio don't always have a Tío or a Tía that plays golf with somebody at Goldman Sachs. So how is somebody named Ramona or Antonio break into Goldman Sachs? Well, we have to be able to work with mentors.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

We have to be able to work with our guides to make sure, but we also have to prep, and the other side, and we have to deal with things like the institutional barriers and challenges as well as some that are created on our own end, even though they're reflective of some of those barriers, like in imposter syndrome, those are real, and being able to give our talent tremendous talent, the skills, but also the confidence, the connectivity to really move forward and move America's workforce forward with. It's ultimately what we're trying to do. We have a tremendous value proposition, and it's not going to shine any brighter than it is through workforce development, through our entrepreneurship, and through innovation as Latinos.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Antonio, thank you so much for spending some time with me.

Dr. Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation president & CEO:

It was wonderful. Thank you for being so gracious. I appreciate all your work too, and for shining such a bright light on our community.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Thank you. I've been speaking with Antonio Tijerino, president and CEO of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Thank you for listening.