



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



MODERATORS

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The 17 Rooms initiative is convened by the Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation to stimulate near-term cooperative actions to advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This document summarizes insights and actions that emerged from the working group discussions in Room 8 during the 17 Rooms 2020 flagship process. The text was independently prepared by the Room's Moderators and participants, in response to the common question asked of all Rooms in 2020: "In light of recent crises linked to COVID-19, systemic racism, and other urgent challenges, what are 1 to 3 actionable priorities over the coming 12-18 months that address near term needs while also making a decisive contribution to protecting or advancing your Goal's 2030 results? What actions can members of your Room take to advance these priorities?" Corresponding documents prepared by all the other Rooms are available [here](#), alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

Problem

Amid unprecedented economic and social disruption, the U.S. and many countries around the world face the challenge to rebuild a resilient economy that can deliver decent employment and opportunities for mobility to all. Good quality jobs that provide opportunities for upward mobility are not only an end in their own right, but are also important drivers of strong, stable, and broad-based economic growth. A mounting body of evidence shows that better jobs are associated with increased [labor force participation](#), [productivity growth](#), [aggregate economic performance](#), [equity](#), [health](#), [public safety](#), and [social cohesion](#). Improving job quality and mobility is [compatible with high](#) employment levels, and also [disproportionately benefits](#) women and people of color.

But even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans were [increasingly](#) working low-wage, dead-end jobs, struggling to move up in the labor market with [declining](#) and uneven access to training and development. Upward mobility rates for low-wage workers have been [falling](#) for decades, often leaving workers churning through low-wage jobs without clear pathways for [advancement](#). Not surprisingly, waning job quality and economic mobility [disproportionately](#) affect women and non-white workers, who are overrepresented [in the low-wage workforce](#). As a result, the American economy is trending towards a lose-lose-lose equilibrium in which firms fall short of realizing their full potential, workers struggle to access opportunity, and the country fails to achieve shared prosperity.

Empowering stakeholders to create good jobs requires a whole-of-society approach. While creating enough high-quality, upwardly-mobile jobs is [unambiguously](#) good for society and [arguably](#) for many companies, doing so may not necessarily make sense for all firms at all times. In many cases, only public policy can raise the floor for workers while maintaining a level playing field for companies. However, effective policy design requires data on the prevalence and distribution of good jobs as well as on the levers that can drive improvement—data that only firms can provide. Agreeing on a set of metrics to capture firm practices is therefore essential to understanding opportunity structures and augmenting efforts to build a good jobs economy.

Widespread calls for accountability and racial justice have placed companies at a historical crossroads, prompting self-reflection and an ambition to create opportunity as well as foster equity for marginalized workers. In response, Room 8 will assemble firm leaders and experts to harness this momentum and create a framework for firms to proactively measure their investments in growing the quantity and access to good jobs. Tracking the right set of metrics will enable firms to more accurately assess how their business contributes towards these shared goals.

Objectives

1. Identify a simple, streamlined set of KPIs (key performance indicators) that firms can use to measure and enhance their creation of high-quality, upwardly-mobile jobs.
2. Form a coalition of private and public sector stakeholders (state and local) willing to lead by example by using and promoting these metrics to improve job quality and economic mobility.

Room 8 will build on the efforts of innovative ESG metrics organizations, such as [JUST Capital](#), [WEF](#), and the [Embankment Project for Inclusive Capitalism](#). Room 8 will also identify channels to disseminate its metrics framework, including to a coalition of over 1,000 firms that have signed Leadership Now's [Business for Racial Equity Pledge](#). In so doing, Room 8 will create a supportive infrastructure, ensuring that the developed metrics move the needle for low-wage workers in the US.