



Upskilling Year in Review 2018

This was an extraordinary year for upskilling. Exciting new programs were announced from a wide range of sectors and by businesses big and small that will help workers get the skills they need to advance and help companies create the skilled workforces they need. The breadth of these programs shows just how adaptable upskilling is, and how it can meet the diverse needs of different businesses and industries. They include tuition programs from Fortune 500 companies that employ hundreds of thousands of US-based workers and small businesses that help their employees get certifications to fulfill new business needs. The growth of these programs shows that an increasing number of businesses are recognizing the value of training and educating their workforce.

This UpSkill America year in review provides the highlights of some of the new training and education programs that have been created this year and tools and strategies for business leaders looking to incorporate upskilling into their company's strategy. We're proud to share these updates with you and look forward to an even better 2019.

Quick Stats

\$600+ million	Upskilling investments announced publicly by large corporations in 2018.
\$1 per day	Cost of earning a college degree through Walmart's new higher education benefit.
\$50 million	Initial investment in the Walt Disney Company's new education program, Disney Aspire.
2.2 million	Number of people eligible for the Prior Learning Access Network of Florida.
14,500+	Number of employees eligible for a free degree through the Discover College Commitment.

"To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society. Companies must benefit all of their stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the communities in which they operate."

-Larry Fink, CEO, BlackRock, *Annual Letter to CEOs: A Sense of Purpose*

Large Corporations

Some of the largest companies in the world launched or expanded programs that will offer education benefits to their US workforces. These programs represent the full range of upskilling, from full tuition benefits to training programs that help employees build new skills during their regular workday. Examples include:

Chili's & Maggiano's

 high school/GED  college

Brinker International, the company behind Chili's Grill & Bar and Maggiano's Little Italy, announced the launch of a comprehensive new education program. A partnership with Pearson, Best You EDU offers participants free GED and associate's degrees in business or general studies. The program is open to all employees who work at least 24 hours per week and have been employed at least 90 days.

Discover

 college

Discover Financial Services unveiled the Discover College Commitment, a new education program benefiting over 14,500 employees. Enrollees—beginning as early as their first day on the job—can pursue a bachelor's degree from one of several participating schools, while Discover covers the cost of tuition and required fees, books, and supplies.

Disney

 college  high school/GED  training

The Walt Disney Company launched Disney Aspire, a new education benefit for over 80,000 hourly employees in the US. The program includes a network of schools where participants can pursue college and graduate degrees, high school equivalency, vocational training, and more, while Disney covers the cost of tuition, application fees, books, and materials.

Kroger

 certification  college  high school/GED

Kroger used its savings from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to introduce a new benefit called Feed Your Future, which offers up to \$3,500 per year in education support for high school equivalency, college degrees, and certification programs for all employees after six months. The benefit includes an innovative "educational leave" component, which "allows associates to take time off work to focus on approved studies."

Lowe's

 apprenticeship  pre-employment  training

Lowe's new Track to the Trades program grants up to \$2,500 in tuition assistance for pre-apprenticeship training in select construction trades. In partnership with Guild Education, Track to the Trades offers academic coaching and places graduates in local apprenticeships.

Walmart

 college

Walmart's new education benefit allows employees to get a college degree for just \$1 a day. Open to all Walmart and Sam's Club associates in the US, the program offers associate's and bachelor's degrees in Business or Supply Chain Management from a network of participating universities.

Innovative Approach

MGM Resorts

 certification  college

MGM Resorts International announced a new partnership with the Nevada System of Higher Education, which will benefit 72,000 employees across the US. The MGM College Opportunity Program grants participants free access to NSHE's digital courses, allowing them earn an associate's, bachelor's, or graduate degree or certificate online, with MGM bearing all costs beyond eligible financial aid.

From the UpSkill America Network

Upskilling is not just limited to major corporations; an uncounted number of small- and medium-sized businesses, nonprofits, colleges, and governments across the country also created new programs in 2018. Thanks to the those who took the time to complete our survey, we learned about a range of new programs including:

JEVS

 *certification*  *college*

JEVS human services began a drug and alcohol counselor apprenticeship, announced a tuition assistance program in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University, and created incentives for employees who obtain or maintain certifications in social work. 1,800 employees at JEVS are eligible for at least one of these programs.

Goodwill Industries of East Texas

 *certification*

Goodwill Industries of East Texas, Inc., offers three programs to help staff build digital and soft skills through its GoodTech Academy. The digital skills courses include a Google IT Professional Certificate and CompTIA A+ Certification. More than 300 employees are currently eligible for these programs.

South Arkansas Community College

 *apprenticeship*  *training*

South Arkansas Community College offers four programs to help local students learn skills that employers need. They include a welding apprenticeship that provides both classroom teaching and hands-on experience and noncredit courses in electrical and instrumentation, mechanical, and loading/unloading for incumbent workers. These programs are offered on an as-needed basis to meet employers' needs.

WorkLife Colorado

 *training*

WorkLife Partnership, working with businesses through its innovative upskill coach, helped launch two new upskilling programs in Colorado this year. At a mechanical engineering company, WorkLife led group and individualized coaching to provide soft skills training for managers and supervisors. It also connected a construction business with a community college to provide onsite ESL classes to employees in its apprenticeship program. At least 15 employees benefited from these programs.

Location-Based Programs

Complete Florida

 *certification*  *college*

Complete Florida launched the Prior Learning Access Network (PLAN) of Florida, which works with employees to help them earn credit for their work experience at state colleges and universities. The innovative program seeks to combine workplace and academic support to upskill working adults and create a more transparent process for adult students to obtain college credit for industry certifications and other alternative credit options. Complete Florida, which is funded by the Florida legislature, added this program to its broad range of education, coaching, and financial assistance services. 2.2 million Floridians are eligible for this program.

Perris, California

 *college*

The city of Perris, California is giving city employees the opportunity to earn a free bachelor's degree through partnership with Study.com. Courses are offered online and students are paired with academic coaches to help them through their education. There are currently 19 city employees enrolled in the program.



New from UpSkill America in 2018

Tools for Employers

In the past year, we also released a series of tools to support employers in their efforts to create, expand, or improve their upskilling programs. These tools help walk you through the key questions you need to ask and the steps needed to get started. More tools are on the way in the coming year, so keep an eye on your inbox and our website.

Key Elements of Successful Tuition Assistance Programs: A New Model for Workforce Development

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/key-elements-of-successful-tuition-assistance-programs-a-new-model-for-workforce-development

From Tuition Reimbursement to Tuition Disbursement: Key Components and Considerations

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/tuition-reimbursement-disbursement-key-components-considerations

Rotation Programs as Upskilling Strategies

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/rotation-programs-upskilling-strategies

Soft Skills Upskilling Planning Guide

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/soft-skills-upskilling-planning-guide

Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/building-registered-apprenticeship-programs

Strategic Guide to Building a Culture of Learning

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/strategic-guide-to-building-a-culture-of-learning

Updates to the UpSkilling Playbook for Employers

We also continue to update our [UpSkilling Playbook for Employers](#) to share models of upskilling and help employers learn what others are doing. This includes four major revisions over the past year:

Three Signs that the UpSkilling Movement is Gaining Momentum (February 2018)

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/three-signs-upskilling-movement-gaining-momentum-2018

New updates to the UpSkilling Playbook (May 2018)

aspeninstitute.org/of-interest/new-updates-upskilling-playbook

Playbook Update #3 – Upskilling from A to Z (August 2018)

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/playbook-update-3-upskilling-from-a-to-z

An Autumn Update on Upskilling (December 2018)

aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/autumn-update-upskilling

These additions cover a diverse array of program types and originate from companies across all sectors of the economy, including Accenture, Amazon, Boeing, Discover, Disney, Lowe's, Kroger, Lyft, ManpowerGroup, McDonald's, PepsiCo, UPS, Walmart, and many more. You can find the read Playbook here: as.pn/upskilling

Acknowledgements

Thanks to these companies highlighted in this update and their partner organizations and so many more who have made 2018 such a significant year. We look forward to working with you in 2019. As always, we would love to hear about your company's work to provide education, training and development. As always, please let us know what you are working on so we can share your good work with others.