

GRADS OF LIFE AND MARKLE FOUNDATION FORM TRAILBLAZING PARTNERSHIP TO DISMANTLE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING THE WORKFORCE

Grads of Life and the Markle Foundation will help companies advance racial and economic equity through a skill-based approach to hiring and advancement

Today, [Grads of Life](#), a national initiative dedicated to breaking down the systemic barriers that have prevented historically excluded talent from having access to family-sustaining jobs,, formed a new partnership with the [Markle Foundation](#) to help companies eliminate exclusionary policies and drive economic and racial equity through inclusive hiring strategies. This new collaboration comes after Grads of Life joined the Markle Foundation's [Rework America Alliance](#), an innovative cross-sector coalition bringing together nonprofits, civil rights and labor groups, and public and private companies to help people move from low-wage roles into good jobs with career advancement. This work focuses on people who have built skills through experience but do not have a bachelor's degree, particularly Black and Latino workers who face some of the most challenging barriers to economic mobility.

As strategic partners advancing equity through employment, together the two entities will help companies shift from a degree-based hiring model to a skills-based one through three primary avenues:

- **Strategic guidance on how to implement skills-based practices** focused on building initial pilot programs, evaluating internal practices and structures, kickstarting initiatives and building champions for a skills-first approach.
- **Training programs** designed for executives, leaders, managers, and HR support teams to build investment, support implementation, and change mindsets to build momentum for skills-first approaches.
- **Ongoing individual and team support** focused on sustaining and scaling a skills-first approach through tools, workshops, strategy support, and change management guidance.

“Grads of Life and the Markle Foundation have long shared a common vision: to dismantle barriers to career mobility and advance economic justice for all,” said **Elyse Rosenblum, CEO and founder of Grads of Life**. “Together we can expand our ability to engage employers and advance equitable hiring practices by eliminating barriers such as degree requirements that have long excluded qualified candidates from accessing the workforce. In addition to joining the Rework America Alliance, we are thrilled to also launch a new strategic partnership with the Markle Foundation and run at this vision together.”

The partnership taps the Markle Foundation's experience and Grads of Life's subject matter expertise and proprietary technology to understand workforce demands, identify jobs that lead to successful careers, and focus roles on skills as opposed to credentials or degrees.

Recognizing that a skills-first approach is critical for a sustainable workforce and despite the growing interest in skills-based practices, many companies still struggle with execution. Companies need tactical resources to help change internal mindsets to embrace this method, scale a skills-based approach and effectively advertise these roles to candidates.

This partnership builds on the momentum created by [OneTen](#) and [the Business Roundtable](#), two peer coalitions that have been instrumental in motivating companies to reconsider traditional approaches to hiring. Grads of Life serves as a strategic partner to both OneTen and the Business Roundtable and will expand on this work with the Markle Foundation.

"This exciting partnership between two expert organizations will help accelerate the adoption of a skills-first approach across the private sector," said Patti Constantakis, Director of Corporate Philanthropy at Walmart, a funder of both organizations. "Walmart has long believed in the power of collaboration to drive systemic social change and we see this as a prime example of greater impact through working together."

"At Markle, we are delighted to be partnering with Grads of Life to help employers take action," said Beth Cobert, Acting President, Markle Foundation. "Our partnership will provide organizations with the hands-on support they need to implement more equitable hiring and advancement practices and build a more robust workforce. By helping employers move from commitment to action we are opening opportunities for more workers to access good quality jobs."

Driven by employer demand, this partnership represents the mark of a new paradigm shift in corporate America focused on driving equity through employment.

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About Grads of Life

[Grads of Life](#) empowers companies to drive equity through employment practices. As a DEI consulting firm, Grads of Life partners with companies to build more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. With services ranging from DEI assessments to skill-based practices implementation to interactive trainings, we help employers hire, retain, and advance historically excluded talent. Our team of subject matter experts provides the research, products, and networks clients need to create a holistic and impactful talent strategy. Born through an initiative of Year Up, Grads of Life has a long history of helping organizations address their talent needs while advancing economic and racial justice. We are proud to continue to help build the employer movement to create system-level change and close the Opportunity Divide.

About Markle Foundation

The [Markle Foundation's](#) work aims to improve the economic security, national security, and health of all Americans. Today, Markle's priority is advancing solutions toward a labor market that will enable workers to move into good, well-paying jobs. Markle formed the Rework America

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Alliance, a nationwide partnership of civil rights groups, nonprofits, private sector employers, labor unions, educators, and others, working to get people without a bachelor's degree into better-paying jobs with opportunities for career growth. Markle also established a nonpartisan Rework America State Network, comprised of 30 governors and the mayor of the District of Columbia, to modernize the labor market at a scale and pace not possible through individual state actions. For more information, visit markle.org, follow @MarkleFdn and @ReworkAmerica on Twitter, and read our book, [America's Moment](#).

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