

## A Network of Business Leaders

An Interview with Kathryn S. Wylde,  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Partnership for New York City

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to assuming her current post in 2000, Kathryn Wylde served as the founding President and Chief Executive Officer of two Partnership affiliates, the Housing Partnership and the Partnership Fund for New York City. She is a board member of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Manhattan Institute, NYC & Company, the Governor's NYC Regional Economic Development Council, and the Fund for Public Education.



Kathryn S. Wylde

**ORGANIZATION BRIEF** Focused on maintaining the city's position as the center of global commerce and innovation, the Partnership for New York City ([pfny.org](http://pfny.org)) is composed of the top 250 CEOs from the city's corporate, investment, and entrepreneurial sectors. It works in partnership with government to advance the interests of the city. The organization's priorities include maintaining the city's competitive position in the attraction and growth of its business sector; improving public education, and fostering public/private partnerships to address the challenges facing the city. The Partnership Fund is its economic development arm that invests in projects that contribute to strategic industry growth, support for distressed communities, and job creation.

### Will you talk about the education and workforce development focus for the Partnership?

The demands of the workplace have changed radically in the past decade as a result of advances in technology. A higher level of education and skills are required for most jobs.

As a result, the role of employers in reform and evolution of the education system has become increasingly important.

Whether that is providing work experience for students, helping develop curricula, or professional training of teachers to deal with the impact of technology in the schools, we are seeking to expand employer engagement in all these areas. We are broadly focused on career and technical education.

### What are the keys to truly reforming the K-12 education system?

The business community has been an aggressive advocate for improving the nation's education system over the past 20 years, pushing for higher standards in education, better pay for teachers and principals, and reorienting toward STEM studies. New York has been a leader in many of these areas, as well as in innovation through charter schools.

K-12 and early childhood education are important, but we are now focusing on the post-secondary skills training required for career advancement and to qualify for a mid-level or higher job. It requires that employers encourage students and junior employees to constantly build skills and support programs that provide mentoring, internships, advanced training, and engagement with institutions of higher education.

A number of major employers in New York City and members of the Partnership are playing leadership roles in this regard,

including IBM with its nationally branded P-tech schools, JPMorgan Chase with its major commitment to advanced skills training, or Infor with the provision of specialized training and internships for public and private university students. Bank of America has developed a very successful summer internship program for college students, and Con Edison and National Grid have created "Energy High" in partnership with a community college where they are preparing students to qualify for jobs in the energy industry that require more than a traditional high school degree. 21st Century Fox is working with the Ghetto Film School and other members of the film industry to create a diverse pipeline of students to fill jobs in their industry that also require specialized training. These efforts add up to a major shift toward education that actively engages employers at every stage of student and employee development.

### How critical is infrastructure investment and is progress being made in that area?

Transportation infrastructure has long been a top priority because the city's economy depends on it, both in terms of access to the global markets through our airports as well as ensuring that employees are readily connected by mass transit to new sites of employment as they open up around the city and the region.

Governor Cuomo has made a major commitment to modernizing New York's transportation system and to making our capital infrastructure programs more efficient and effective. He is aggressively embracing public/private partnerships, which are critical to our ability to meet the construction, financial, and operating demands of a first-class system. He is insisting that state agencies achieve a whole new level of performance and asking the private sector to help make that happen.

We have been working closely with his administration on a more efficient private-sector assisted approach to public infrastructure. Over the

next few years, we believe this will bring great new facilities online in a much accelerated fashion.

### Will you talk about the role the Partnership Fund plays in supporting key initiatives that promote growth within the innovation sector?

The Partnership Fund started in 1995 with a major commitment to building Silicon Alley 1.0 in New York. Those efforts laid the groundwork for the city's emergence as a 21st Century innovation hub.

Many of the early Silicon Alley companies aren't still around, but the entrepreneurs who led them and learned the innovation business, as well as the universities and investors who contributed to that initial era, have stuck with it. Today, we are seeing New York recognized as a global leader in the tech sector, not just in digital media and e-commerce, but increasingly in life sciences, in advanced manufacturing, software innovation, health IT, and fin-tech.

The Partnership Fund has continued to provide leadership with accelerators providing access for young companies and entrepreneurs to the corporate leaders who tend to be the first adopters of new products and, therefore, incredibly important partners and customers for start-up companies. The Fund plays a crucial role in identifying and building emerging industry clusters in the city and the Partnership seeks to ensure that these growing sectors get the public policy support they need to thrive.

Our next big push is in life sciences where New York has long been a global leader in research and discoveries, thanks to our great medical research institutions and universities, but we have lagged in turning research into successful companies that create jobs and economic activity in the city. Going forward, we are concentrating on working with city and state government to build a strong life sciences industry cluster here.

### As new business has come into New York City, how do you engage those next generation companies?

Over the past two decades, New York City's economy has evolved from being dominated by top-down corporate, Wall Street structure into a much more diverse and increasingly entrepreneurial economy. We have tried to ensure that the Partnership reflects the diverse leadership of the business community across all sectors, ranging from the international corporate and investment sectors to the fast-growing entrepreneurial leaders of technology and creative sectors. We have maintained a good mix of established and emerging business leaders across all the important industries in New York City. ●