

Creating Partnerships

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) is composed of top 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.

What are key challenges facing New York City and what are the Partnership's priorities at this time?

The Partnership provides continuity of business leadership and support for building and sustaining the city economy. Today, our economy is going through rapid changes. New York's global industry leaders are at the forefront of transformation in virtually every sector of the economy, making New York a center of innovation, not just in the tech startup world, but across the board.

The Partnership endeavors to tell this story of how our leaders of traditional industries have propelled growth in the local economy during an era of rapid innovation by introducing and adopting new technology and attracting the top talent from around the world to the city. This requires partnerships with government as well as the non-profit sector, universities and research institutions to make sure that New York is keeping pace with global economic change.

We're trying to ensure that entrepreneurs leading emerging companies have direct access to the markets and relationships they need to have with

established industry players. We are also engaging employers with the education system to ensure that our workforce is prepared to excel and to remain the most productive in the world.

Another big challenge is to upgrade the infrastructure of the city to keep up with the growth of our population and our economy. The Partnership has been focused this year on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs our subways, commuter rail and bus lines. We're trying to make sure they're getting the benefit of private sector expertise

to support their efforts to modernize and improve services. This year, we initiated the Transportation Innovation Partnership, which is a public/private partnership with the MTA to work together on enhancing our public transportation infrastructure.

Then there are the fiscal challenges the city faces as it seeks to keep up with growth and deliver high quality services. These are concerns the private sector shares, be it the supply of affordable housing where the real estate industry plays a critical role, or the adequacy of our healthcare system.

The population and economy of the city are bigger than ever. Government alone cannot solve all the problems that come with growth. The business community has to contribute.

Will you discuss the recent study done by the Partnership regarding the critical role of foreign direct investment in New York City?

Our study of foreign direct investment in New York illustrated that we are still a location of preference for companies from many countries around the world, particularly from Europe and Canada. However, we're not expanding and diversifying foreign investment as much as we should.

We have more than 5,000 foreign companies employing almost 300,000 people in New York, but we don't have good representation of companies from Asia, India and other emerging economies.

Some of this is beyond local control. Policies of the federal government are complicating investment decisions by foreign companies. We certainly depend on the federal government having policies that support foreign investment and our members strive to make that case to the decision-makers in Washington D.C.

One focus is to support programs and facilities that attract young, innovative tech companies from abroad that are looking to establish a footprint in the U.S. or the Western Hemisphere. We have supported projects like New Lab in the Brooklyn

Navy Yard, an advanced manufacturing accelerator that has start-up companies from all over the world. Our Partnership Fund runs a FinTech Innovation Lab that attracts early stage companies by offering the opportunity to work directly with financial industry leaders to refine their products. We are currently working with the state and city governments and medical research institutions to build a strong life sciences cluster that is becoming a magnet for the greatest researchers, investors and entrepreneurs.

How critical has it been for the Partnership to be a catalyst in developing partnerships between young companies and those that are more established?

Technology is the fastest growing sector in the New York City economy, so it's critically important that New York attracts entrepreneurial companies. Our history as a destination for corporate headquarters and corporate capital is critical – half the jobs in New York still come from established companies with over 500 employees.

However, those companies will only remain global leaders if they embrace the technology that is emerging at a rapid pace from young entrepreneurial efforts. This means bringing entrepreneurs from all over the world to New York and supporting them and creating partnerships with established companies, which is what we try to do.

Increasingly today, established global companies are not trying to develop the way forward exclusively with their internal resources, but are looking to understand and be open to ideas and solutions that are being developed externally, particularly in the startup, entrepreneurial sector. In a city as big and as complicated as New York, it is not easy to find the right partners and identify the most promising relationships. Brokering those relationships, making those introductions and finding ways that major corporations can identify the most promising young companies that offer relevant technologies, software and artificial intelligence, is something that our Partnership Fund was designed to do. It has become a very important network building within the city's high growth industries and between the public and private sectors. When Henry Kravis and Jerry Speyer launched our fund, with a civic mission, we had high hopes for what could be accomplished if we got the established industry leaders to work more closely with young startup entrepreneurs. This effort has succeeded beyond our expectations and the vitality of New York's economy today is very much due to the role that the Fund has played in building these networks. ●