

How to create good new NYC jobs for all

It starts in the schools

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
Saturday, July 5, 2014, 4:30 AM



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At P-TECH, kids learn to code.

Since the worst of the recession, New York City has gained back the jobs it lost and then some, surpassing its all-time high of over 4 million private-sector jobs by more than 5%. This is a resurgence to be sure, but it is a disappointingly uneven one.

Unemployment has leveled out at 8%, well above the national average of 6.1%, and the city's economy is still growing slowly, at a rate of just 2% per year.

In short, the road to opportunity remains closed for far too many New Yorkers.

The most dynamic activity is in the city's creative economy, the sector that is driven by high-skilled, high-paying jobs in business services, finance, science and the arts, which together account for more than a third of the city's workforce. Engineering, nursing and graphic design are showing particularly impressive growth as well.

Built on a foundation of app development, media/entertainment, online and mobile gaming and commerce, high-tech has become a powerful engine of growth in Manhattan and Brooklyn over the last decade, launching more than 500 startups and attracting almost \$3 billion in investment. More than 90,000 workers are employed in tech in the city and the number is rapidly growing.

Yet over half the city's employment is made up of jobs that pay an average of just \$19 an hour (\$38,000 a year), many much lower. And 400,000 New Yorkers aged 20 to 29 are not in school and are either un- or under-employed. While the city has witnessed a modest rebirth in artisanal manufacturing, those new jobs can't begin to replace the 188,000 manufacturing jobs that have disappeared since 1990.

Increasing the minimum wage and the earned income tax credit are important steps in helping low-income New Yorkers make ends meet.

But the ultimate future of our economy depends on a new approach. This approach is based on building what we call "on-ramps of opportunity" by harnessing the full potential of the city's creative economy via investments in human capital and infrastructure.

The agenda begins in the city's public schools. Only 100 of New York's 75,000 educators teach computer science; that's more than 9,800 students per computer science teacher. We need to teach technical skills to every student — and to invest in broadband infrastructure that can support interactive e-learning tools in schools, libraries and homes.

While there are numerous programs that provide internships and college scholarships for gifted students, we also need to work with employers to create apprenticeships and other new programs that provide hands-on training for careers in project management, design, coding and more to students with different strengths — the high-tech equivalents of the skills that once supported so many New Yorkers who worked in manufacturing.

The city also needs to bolster and support its many local colleges and universities, historically some of our most valuable on-ramps to opportunity.

Most of all, we need to double down on New York's entrepreneurial spirit, creating incubators in all five boroughs that offer high-level technical, strategic and material assistance for all kinds of businesses — not just for high-tech, but for food clusters, music, graphic design and more. And

we need to continue to support and expand the offices of the 21st century — shared work spaces that allow a single individual to launch a new business with little more than a desk and a dream.

On-ramps of opportunity won't build themselves. But over time, with concerted effort, we can make sure that New York City remains a middle-class city where opportunity is a birthright, not a privilege, and where success is determined not by your zip code, but by how hard you are willing to work.

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Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/create-good-new-nyc-jobs-article-1.1854241#ixzz36ngw4z3V>