IICF Regional Forums

2024 IICF Regional Forums Recap

Building an Inclusive and Innovative Future of Work at the 2024 IICF Regional Forums



30 YEARS

Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation

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A Letter from Betsy Myatt, Vice President and Chief Program Officer of the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation

As I reflect on the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation's 30th anniversary, I am renewed and energized by IICF's mission and its spirit, reflected in each of this year's Regional Forums in New York, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and London that welcomed more than 800 industry professionals. At each event this past June:

- we gathered remarkable thought leaders, fostered a greater sense of belonging to carry back and implement in our workplaces,
- challenged one another to think about the future of insurance and our roles in it,
- shared our ideas to recruit and nurture the next generation of talent and
- held out examples of leadership that will help make a bright future full of possibilities a reality for us all.

As the philanthropic voice of the insurance industry, the IICF offers a unique opportunity each year to gather the best and brightest of our industry. These gatherings facilitate invaluable discussions on key issues facing our professionals while also inspiring and motivating those individuals to look for opportunities to rally themselves and their colleagues to better support the communities that sustain us personally and professionally through volunteerism and charitable giving. Nowhere else in our industry is this level of philanthropic focus and sharing possible.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not also thank all our event sponsors, including our Four-Conference Diamond Presenting Sponsors: Amwins, CNA, Markel and USAA. Their generous support makes all we do at these events possible. On behalf of countless grateful industry professionals, I thank each one and offer the sincere appreciation of everyone at IICF for helping us to make the 2024 IICF Regional Forums a success.

Sincerely,



Betsy Myatt
Vice President/Chief Program Officer
Executive Director, Northeast Division
Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation

"Tell people who you are, what you need and how you operate. Then ask what is needed from you to be successful."

Chris DeSantis, Author, Speaker, Consultant, and Podcast Host

5 Key Takeaways from the IICF Regional Forums

Explore new practices, not necessarily the standard best practices. Our industry, like so many others, likes to do things the way they have always been done. We need practices that resonate with today's workforce and convey authenticity to build a future of work with equitable opportunities.

Refresh talent recruitment strategies. Businesses implementing mentorship programs are seeing benefits. Recruiting underrepresented talent, including veterans, mothers returning to the workforce, high school students and more has proven successful for these individuals and for the companies as well.

Ground inclusion and belonging ambition in company core values. Avoid objectives and measures that are abstract and disconnected. Goals should be clearly linked to the business to resonate with the workforce.

Open your mind to new connections. We need to encourage each other to connect and build meaningful connections with people different from ourselves. Diversity of thought will improve innovation while increasing employee retention.

Unite social progress and environmental stewardship. We have the resources to solve our social and environmental issues. Businesses should have the will to be courageous and distribute our resources to make a difference within our communities.





Inclusion and Belonging

Cultivating a culture of inclusion and belonging was a continuing theme across the 2024 IICF Regional Forums. Speakers and panelists repeatedly emphasized the essential role these social traits play in fostering a future of work for our industry that empowers people and boosts business with fresh perspectives and innovative thinking. In particular, speakers focused on the strength found in diversity, progress made and the importance of promoting a broad view of inclusion that considers accessibility, neurodiversity and more.

Katie Beth Ongena, Assistant Vice President of Executive Talent Management at Chubb, opened the IICF Southeast Forum with an appeal for the audience toward further inclusion and belonging. "If it makes you uncomfortable, it's probably worth exploring," she told attendees.

At the IICF Midwest Forum, speakers recognized the work that has been done across the insurance industry. Arun D'Silva, Audit Partner at KPMG, polled the room when he took the stage and learned that 88% of responding attendees felt their organizations were investing more in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) than they had five years ago. Respondents cited new initiatives around education, metrics, monitoring, awareness and training across the industry. While there has been tremendous progress, Heather Giordano, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at CNA, pointed out that progress has been achieved at different rates across the industry – not everyone is doing the same work or advancing the same efforts. She surmised that much of the progress made over the last few years was due to conversations and idea sharing. "Continuing conversations and sharing ideas is critical," she said.

To truly be inclusive, it's imperative that leadership ensure everyone in the company understands why this goal is a priority and that we do not allow a concentration on just one particular aspect of the diversity space. It needs to work for everyone, Trevor Gandy, Global Head of Diversity Equity and Inclusion at AXA XL, said at the IICF Northeast Forum. "As we tell our story, we try to make sure we are actually articulating our objective."

Accessibility was another key topic of the inclusion conversation. Nadine Vogel, Chief Executive Officer at Springboard Consulting, gave IICF Northeast Forum attendees a lesson in disability etiquette noting not all disabilities are visible. She also offered tips to ensure an environment that considers the needs of the neurodiverse community more broadly. "We need to slow down and be respectful of how people communicate and what they need," she said.

"When you have diverse groups that help to create a better working environment, all boats rise with the lifting tides," Chris Reilly, National Practice Leader and Senior Vice President for Amwins Group Benefits and National Link-USA Co-Chair, shared at the IICF Northeast Forum.

Reilly took the opportunity during the Inclusion Perspectives panel to share his personal story of coming out at work, what he learned and how he pays it forward in his work at Amwins and with LINK-USA to make the insurance industry the employer of choice for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Finally, Lilian Vanvieldt-Gray, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Alliant, inspired the room to do more at the IICF Western Forum with her closing remarks, saying, "With each step, we see progress. We can be the agency of change. It matters."



"Gen Z job candidates are willing to move among companies until they find a company that will provide an intersection between strong pay and a diverse workplace that fits their needs."

Subha Barry, President and CEO at Seramount

The Future of Work





The insurance workplace is rapidly evolving and integrating new technology, hybrid work models, wellness initiatives and more. During this year's IICF Regional Forums, business leaders, insurance executives and industry professionals worked together to assess the state of the workplace. The goal was to find actionable practices for prioritizing inclusive opportunities, career development and technology to advance a future of work in insurance that embraces fresh perspectives to inspire innovation.

Workplace culture has long been a focus of discussion at the IICF Regional Forums. As Xavier Ramey, CEO of Justice Informed shared at the IICF Midwest Forum, when everyone is the same in our rooms, we don't realize we are not making progress. This homogeneity can slow industry progress and innovation.

Rather than embracing homogeneity, insurance should embrace the new and different. Insurance businesses should not simply rely only on best practices or the way things have traditionally been done but should expand focus to include new, fresh perspectives that result in new practices. New practices generate creative ideas and approaches that can lead to a more open and innovative workplace.

Career management must also continue to be a focal point in designing the future of work. Ivy Kusinga, Founder of Career Vines, shared at the IICF Northeast Forum that self and relationship management are critical to business development. Even the most brilliant employees can fail to be effective if they do not properly manage themselves or their relationships. Dedicating resources to interpersonal skills and relationship building is critical to address these issues.

Kusinga also shared how a refocus on career development can help improve industry employees' quality of work and job satisfaction. People frequently discuss following your passion, but this is not always a realistic approach. Rather than following passions, consider following the opportunity. Often, when professionals follow their passion for a career, they find themselves disappointed. Instead, Kusinga recommended living passionately, but keeping an open mind and following the trail of opportunities that can pave the way for professional development and career success.

Finally, panelists and speakers discussed how the future of work is also dependent on technology. Artificial intelligence is on the horizon and will impact how the insurance industry operates and interacts with employees, colleagues, vendors, customers and more. As Gordon Wintrob, Chief Technology Officer at Newfront, shared at the IICF Western Forum, "AI can unlock experiences for our customers that they didn't even know were possible." Insurance is changing at a remarkable pace and businesses need to stay in front of the next innovations to not only rise above the competition, but to stay relevant.

The insurance industry is actively working to build a more inclusive and innovative future of work. A workplace with improved diversity of thought, inspired and motivated professionals focused on career development and businesses that are working to stay ahead of the latest trends in technology will present insurance as a sought-after employer for the next generation of talent.

"With each step, we see progress. We can be the agent of change. It matters."

Lilian Vanvieldt-Gray, Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Alliant Insurance Services

The Future of Talent in Insurance

A top theme across the 2024 IICF Regional Forums was the future of talent. Industry leaders and talent experts gathered at the five regional forums to discuss solutions and create actionable steps to attract and retain new talent as individuals join the industry.

At the IICF Northeast Forum, Meghan Parrilla, Vice President - People Organization Integration Leader (M&A) at Aon, and Karen Shirvanian, Senior Vice President of Kevin Davis Insurance Services, shared they are increasingly hearing that young talent does not stay in the industry. This is a challenge for insurance organizations as we are set to lose approximately 400,000 employees by 2026 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Parrilla and Shirvanian shared that it is important to make employees part of the solution and part of the decision making to show individuals why they should want to stay. Additionally, younger generations want to see a clear career path and know there is room for growth in their role.

Mentorship can go a long way in helping new talent learn about the industry, grow into new roles and control the future of their career path. The IICF Mentoring Alliance aims to help strengthen mentorship to solve for these problems, by connecting emerging leaders from underrepresented communities with diverse role models and allies across the insurance industry. Parrilla and Shirvanian shared that the program has been enriching for both mentors and mentees as it has helped grow and support new talent while challenging existing industry members.

Panelists Liana Bran, Director of Expansion Strategy at CARA Collective, Sasha Peña, Managing Director of Career and Leadership Advancement at Chicago Scholars, Francheska Feliciano, Director of Aon's Apprenticeship Program, and Brandis Haugabrook, Outreach and





Engagement Manager at Hope Chicago, joined moderator Carlos Herrera, Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at RT Specialty, at the IICF Midwest Forum to continue the conversation on the future of talent. Panelists shared the sentiment that mentorship and skill development are key to finding and retaining strong talent. Haugabrook stated that it is crucial to identify the right skill to be successful in a new position or industry and nurturing that skill is an important way mentors can help new talent.

When asked what younger generations are looking for, Bran responded that Gen Z has distinct expectations. Haugabrook explained it is important to put an emphasis on the journey, create opportunities for growth and give them opportunities to contribute their voices. Peña shared that business resource groups and an investment in people of color are important to younger talent. Gen Z values authenticity and they are concerned about mental health.

Subha Barry, President of Seramount, echoed Peña's thoughts on the importance of mental health and wellbeing at the IICF Northeast Forum. Gen Z is the most stressed generation in the workplace and Barry shared a lot of that stress comes from balancing the viral nature of frequent social media usage with day-to-day challenges. Younger generations are willing to job hop and will do so until they find a company that provides an intersection of good pay, work they are passionate about and core values that align.

As the talent gap continues to grow, it is time for the insurance industry to step back and look at how we can evolve our recruitment and retention strategies to build a more inclusive industry for the next generation.



Giving Back

IICF's leadership events were established as the Women in Insurance Conference Series in 2013 and are the only events of their kind to benefit nonprofit and charitable organizations through IICF's Community Grants Program. Since 2013, $10.7 million has been raised through the IICF Regional Forums and Global Conferences, benefiting nonprofit partners in the US and UK. IICF grants provide direct support in addressing food insecurity, homelessness, education, disaster relief and preparedness, children at risk, veteran causes and more. IICF will surpass $50 million in total grants awarded, and more than 350,000 volunteer hours served, as the foundation celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2024.

Looking Ahead

Join us next year when the IICF Global Conference returns to New York City on June 10–11. This will be a can't miss event as we reinvent the conference to continue addressing the evolving needs of our industry.

2025 IICF Global Conference

Updates coming soon at: www.iicfglobalconference.org

"Diversity is about counting heads and Inclusion is about making heads count. Said another way – Diversity is a data-driven exercise and Inclusion is a choice."

Linde Hotchkiss, EVP, Regional Managing Director of Newfront

IICF Regional Forums and Global Conferences: Our Impact

$10 million+ raised from IICF Forums & Conferences, benefiting our communities.

Over 12,000 women and men have attended.

100% of survey respondents Highly Recommend/ Recommend attending.

Attendees have joined from 30+ states and 10+ countries!

Your support directly benefits our neighbors in need.





"We are all works in progress. Learning never stops, no matter who you are. You can always sharpen yourself."

Ivy Kusinga, Founder of Career Vines

Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation

Making a Bigger Impact

Proceeds from the 2024 IICF Regional Forums benefit charitable causes and help deliver vital resources across the US and UK through the IICF Community Grants Program. Grants are awarded to nonprofit partners championing children at risk, veterans, vulnerable families and those struggling with food insecurity and homelessness, and many other important causes.

Sponsorship and attendance of IICF's Regional Forums and Global Conferences make this positive community impact possible.
Thank you for your support and we hope to see you in 2025!

2025 IICF Global Conference: June 10–11 in New York City

Join with hundreds of insurance leaders as we explore the most critical topics in our industry.

www.iicfglobalconference.org

See you in New York!

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