

THE NEXTGEN NARRATIVE

Insights from Across America



This Listening Tour was conducted between April and September 2025, with the aim of gathering insights on the priorities of our emerging business leaders. The Listening Tour utilized a mixed-methods approach combining facilitated roundtable discussions, participant surveys, and targeted stakeholder outreach across multiple U.S. cities. Each stop brought together emerging business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community partners to identify regional challenges and opportunities shaping the future economy. Insights were synthesized across locations to surface national trends and region-specific priorities. Our sample size was 212, and our margin of error is +/- 7%.

Key Themes



Affordable, reliable broadband and digital tools are now seen as baseline requirements for participation in the future economy.



Emerging leaders want guardrails and pathways that ensure technological change benefits workers, not displaces them.



Participants expect companies to lead with transparency, diversity, sustainability, and mental health in mind.

Core Insights

The listening tour revealed several core insights that will guide our future initiatives. These insights highlight areas of strength and opportunity, providing a roadmap for strategic action.



82% believe digital connectivity remains a core barrier to growth.

Entrepreneurs describe broadband access as “infrastructure equity,” essential for business expansion, workforce development, and community participation.



89% say companies should promote flexible, mental-health-centered work models. 88% believe young, diverse leaders strengthen boards and corporate accountability. Strong support for climate innovation, green tech, and collaboration.



87% say clear ethical AI guidelines are essential. 83% support incentives for worker retraining. Leaders want transparent AI

governance, privacy protections, and inclusive upskilling for small firms—not only large employers.



82% believe student debt reform is needed for economic mobility.

Entrepreneurs frequently cited difficulty accessing early-stage capital, navigating procurement, and handling cost-of-living pressures (e.g., housing, childcare).

Next Steps

Based on the findings of the listening tour, we are committed to the following next steps:

- Advance a national Digital Equity Compact to coordinate broadband expansion and affordability.
- Build regional digital hubs that combine connectivity with training in AI, cybersecurity, and e-commerce.
- Develop voluntary ethical AI and data governance standards for businesses.
- Incentivize employer-led retraining, portable credentials, and modern workforce transition programs.
- Promote next-generation board pipelines and expand ESG-linked incentives for inclusive leadership.
- Encourage mental-health-centered, flexible business models as part of responsible corporate practice.
- Expand student debt relief tools and reform SBA rules to improve access to early-stage capital.
- Simplify procurement pathways and increase working-capital options for small businesses.

