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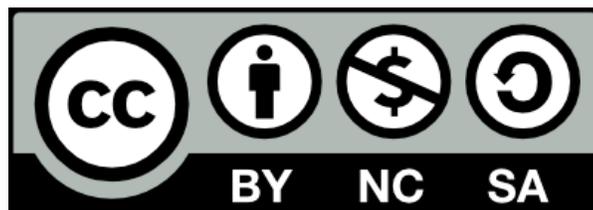
# Rewarding Work

Policy Possibilities for Public Discussion

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# ILLUSTRATIVE POLICY POSSIBILITIES

## FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION

### **A. Sustainability as a Market Framework**

*Develop and implement “sustainability” principles and practices in ways that redesign our governance of the economy in general and rewarding work in particular with regard to the long term viability of society.*

### **B. Market Incentives to Improve Rewards**

*Rely on adaptations of market incentives to recognize and reward work and protect individual choice in a democratic market economy.*

### **C. Optimal Performance**

*Encourage all steps toward the maximization of human potential, with views toward improved use of societal resources, better organizational practices, and enhanced individual satisfaction.*

### **D. Enhance Worker and Citizen Participation**

*Workers and citizens would be encouraged and empowered to participate in workplace and societal decision-making and organize to pursue their broad interests in rewarding work.*

### **E. Reinvigorated Regulation to Protect Rewards**

*Rewards for work would be protected through governance supports for reinvigorated regulation on behalf of work-related benefits and rights.*

### **F. A Covenant for Social Provision of Basic Needs and Rights**

*Engage the public in a broad dialogue about meeting basic needs and protecting basic rights that leads to a societal agreement on the public responsibility to provide such protections.*

### **G. Learning About Work: Economic and Civic Literacy**

*Support increased and improved efforts to prepare citizens and workers to understand societal conditions relating to work and the economy and to exercise informed choice in the governance of those conditions.*

### **H. Value and Balance Time**

*Develop a heightened regard for leisure time, balance it with work time, and implement protections that safeguard that regard and enforce that balance.*

# REWARDING WORK

## AS AN AREA OF PUBLIC POLICY CONCERN

**What if citizens could** revisit the assumptions behind our current approaches to rewarding work? What if they could explore the place of work in society and its impact on individuals in an open-ended way? What if they were told that they were encouraged to think outside the box and develop contrasting governance possibilities?

This report reflects the work of participants in a long-term discussion project sponsored by the Interactivity Foundation. In this project, a panel of “generalists” and a separate panel of “specialists,” each with 6-7 members, met monthly for approximately two years to explore and develop possible questions, answers, and eventually a number of broad “possibilities” to address emerging concerns about work, pay, other benefits and rewards, and employment generally. In their discussions, these participants re-imagined the frameworks for rewarding work in terms of family and community, moving rewards past exclusively individual terms. They also re-imagined rewarding work in societal terms, inviting exploration of systems that support life and society, implicating an understanding of the economy as the creation of humans and subject to human adaptation and correction.

These re-imaginings led to consideration of “basic needs” as a foundational aspect of rewarding work. Further discussion led to exploration of the place of learning and access to information in rewarding work. These discussions in turn led to exploration of the place of citizen and worker participation in possible rewarding work. Engaging these re-imaginings is one way to anticipate what social and politic stakes might be involved in the emerging global economy.

**Entering this world** brings you face-to-face with a variety of questions:

- What is work?
- What makes work rewarding?
- What is a reward?
- What are the roles of individuals and institutions in rewarding work?
- What different approaches might be taken in rewarding work?
- What possible policy consequences might result from these approaches?
- What happens if the preceding questions are not addressed?

**In this re-imagined world,** such questions are starting points for further questions and for answers that may prove helpful in developing conceptual possibilities that reframe our view of rewarding work. In the discussion project’s re-imagining, the participants’ reframing of rewarding work implicated the following:

- A way of meeting obligations to family
- Serving community interests
- Addressing “scale issues”
- Reframing concepts of the market economy in ways that prove helpful to emerging systems of rewards
- Accounting for resource allocations central to considerations of rewards
- Acknowledging that “rights” are implicated in rewarding work
- Providing for the unleashing of human potential
- Accounting for “organizational culture” as a major element in rewarding work

# REWARDING WORK AS AN AREA OF CONCERN

**The possibilities** presented in this report are offered in the spirit of enlarging the public discussion around rewarding work and providing some initial ideas about how such discussions might be approached in contrasting ways. These possibilities, however, are commended to you by the project participants only as possible starting points for such an enlarged discussion and not as endpoints. That is, they are meant to spur additional discussion, and they are not offered as recommendations for specific or final policy solutions.

**The eight possibilities** selected by the discussion panelists for inclusion in this report reveal a number of interrelated and longer-term issues and concerns relating to work and its rewards, including the following:

- *Rewarding work involves more than the traditional notions of “employment” and “benefits.”*
- *Thinking about rewarding work in fixed, occupational ways is frustrating and thwarts innovation.*
- *Many of the fundamental notions of basic needs and rights are better addressed at the societal level rather than through employment.*
- *Rewarding work is better accomplished in broadly applicable ways that raise overall conditions rather than addressing specific categories or occupations in employment.*
- *Useful “standards” either exist or are readily available, but are often not implemented on the right scale or they lack enforcement “muscle”.*
- *The “status quo” or current system merits little exploration and does not match up with emerging conditions and expectations.*
- *Broader thinking about the overall context of work is needed to address the security and adaptability of rewarding work possibilities (the environment, technological developments, and globalization to name a few).* (listing continues at top of next column)

- *Information and opportunities for meaningful democratic participation are essential parts of this area of concern.*
- *Common assumptions of the panelists—and their possibilities—included:*
  - o *Our economy is rapidly changing. There is an “emerging economy” that is bringing significant, though not well understood, change to the nature of work and our relationship to it.*
  - o *We live in—and will continue to live in—a generally open society with a more or less popularly elected, republican form of government that is at least marginally responsive to the will of the governed*
  - o *We live in—and will continue to live in—some form of a mixed-market economy in which both market incentives and government regulation, subsidy, and tax policies affect our economy to varying degrees.*
  - o *Increasing globalization is bringing us all into either direct or indirect contact with political and market frameworks both different from our own and not generally subject to our direct control.*
  - o *Implementation of any of the possibilities (or any combination of them or their parts) will require much more citizen discussion, deliberation, and development of the ideas and policies, of which this report is only the initial step in a very long trek.*

This general “sense of the discussion” may help in understanding how and why the project discussions went in the direction of the selected possibilities and not others.

**We invite you** to review and discuss the possibilities in this report. We hope that they will help to stimulate your own thinking and discussions on this topic and that they will provide a springboard for others who may wish to explore different and long-term policy possibilities for rewarding work.

# SUSTAINABILITY AS A MARKET FRAMEWORK

*Ecological and resource issues bring new and significant forces to bear on the work environment. When the biosphere itself is threatened, the issue of rewarding work takes on a whole new context. Matters of survival and social responsibility loom over the day-to-day details of rewarding work and can no longer be ignored without endangering large numbers of people.*

**Are you concerned** about the continued viability of our society? Does it seem like current policies have been shortsighted and ultimately destructive of the livelihoods of many working people? Have you wondered if your children and grandchildren will enjoy a standard of living comparable to yours? Can the Earth handle the strain of growing populations on its clean water, its soil, and its natural resources? Is there something fundamentally wrong when more attention is paid to the consumer preferences of high paid individuals than there is to the health and nutrition issues of the working poor? Might we re-envision work and its rewards in a way that answers these questions?

**This possibility** recognizes an urgent need to reconfigure and reorganize the economy around a set of principles that stress the long-term viability of societies and economies. These principles are generally described as “sustainability” and usually evoke more than a single approach or response. “Sustainability” develops continuously with our knowledge of the interaction of natural systems and human populations. It includes traditional elements of conservation and planning, but also includes and depends on more recent thinking from new technologies and organizational development.

Under this possibility, sustainability becomes an overriding policy direction that takes priority over other directions. It places the survival of humans in a system of balance with natural systems as the guiding approach to regulation and governance. Its tools in implementation will likely look familiar (laws, rules, and enforcement), but its scale and organization may need to accommodate our understanding of natural systems and how most environmental issues defy artificial political boundaries.

**The panelists** who developed this possibility saw it as central to the future of work. They saw sustainability in a context of where people work, how they get there, the distance between markets and materials, and the effects of their actions on others and the Earth.

**Sustainability** was seen as a “large scale” possibility. “This approach is not for sissies”, one panelist said, “there will be many uncomfortable changes that will impact many.” Some thought that more modestly scaled possibilities ignore the urgency of the issues and act to put off tough choices until another day. Not all were convinced that sustainability required a reduction in living standards in developed economies. But all seem to identify with the ethical side of the maxim about “living simply so that others may simply live.”

**Other perspectives.** Even those most devoted to this possibility readily admitted that it would pose many challenges. There was some concern that further discussion of these issues might take too much time and that many of the issues addressed by this possibility may be beyond the “tipping point” of current solutions. Others felt that this possibility opens the way to new forms of governance and enlarged authority that scare them even more. They felt that this possibility may encroach on traditional notions of national sovereignty and constitutional rule of law. They may be concerned that fears of crisis, like fears of terrorism, may be used to sustain a “state of emergency” that erodes legal rights without due cause and for uncertain ends.

Other citizens may feel that the needed science, technology, organizational approaches, and consensus for this possibility are too under-developed. They may feel that a possibility needs to have a strong focus and fairly clear ( if even multiple ) paths to implementation. Otherwise, sustainability may be little more than a research project rather than a viable policy possibility.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Develop and implement ways to incorporate “sustainability” principles and practices in ways that redesign governance of the economy in general and rewarding work in particular with regard to the long term viability of society.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Converging environmental and social problems threaten democratic societies and natural systems. Survival itself may be at stake, and the size and severity of threats seem to have clearly increased. The possible solutions also seem to present themselves in ways that challenge our thinking and our usual approaches to governance.
- This possibility assumes that solid waste, energy production, toxic conditions, human-induced shifts in climate, transportation systems, housing patterns, industrial development, food production, and raw material extraction are among some of the many interconnected issues that will affect rewarding work in the future. The possibility further assumes that our failure to address and develop more sustainable ways to deal with these interconnections will create unacceptable conditions.
- The possibility proceeds from the belief that our understanding of what works long term has improved significantly and will continue to improve. While addressing the “big picture” of society and natural systems, the possibility is motivated by deep concern that citizens have meaningful opportunities to contribute to their communities and support themselves and their families.
- This possibility looks to understand risks and opportunities and total social and economic costs in order to temper the market economy’s preoccupation with short-term growth and maximization of profit. This possibility requires a shift in thinking from “more is better” to a belief in “sufficiency”.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Changes in governance frameworks

- Globalization frameworks that include democratic governance, observance of the rule of law, respect for human rights, and safeguards against corruption
- Adaptive systems capacity to provide margins of safety in dealing with unanticipated difficulties and ongoing adjustment to environmental impacts
- Strong incentives for innovative technologies and strong regulation to drive them

Changes in timelines

- Longer view of periods necessary to evaluate usefulness and sustainability of policy approaches (decouple from campaign cycles and quarterly reports)
- Regular periodic review of policies implicating the economy and the environment
- Couple longer view with greater flexibility to move quickly in emergencies

Changes in thinking

- Ongoing public dialogue on “what is enough” and how to satisfy needs that do not impose undue costs on future generations or natural systems
- Strong advisory role for science and experts of various types identifying the main threats to sustainability
- Politics used to set general adaptive direction, not to reward interest groups

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Encourage the changed thinking that would ease public acceptance of strong measures and would indicate a level of social solidarity around sustainability
- Generate recognition of the need for certain levels of transnational governance and appropriately scaled institutions
- Entail significant transition costs and provoke strong reactions from those vested in the status quo

## MARKET INCENTIVES TO IMPROVE REWARDS

*The market, though far from perfect, offers a variety of established ways to reward work. These market-based solutions may be relied upon in many situations and may provide greater flexibility than rigid regulatory approaches. Existing market incentives and new combinations of incentives could be supported in ways that lessen reliance on government.*

**Many citizens are uncomfortable** with the extensive government involvement in day-to-day employment arrangements. Many enjoy the flexibility that individual arrangements give them and are leery of one-size-fits-all mandates. These concerns have a privacy dimension when the confidentiality between employer and employee are considered. Indeed there are some who feel that government determination of rewards for work is inevitably invasive, contaminating, and destructive.

**Citizens with less faith** in government solutions have many questions about proposals that stray from market principles. What happens to incentives for effort and performance in an environment of equalized rewards? Does the “work ethic” itself lose relevance in situations where government provides for all basic needs? How do we reward our top talent, our risk takers, and our innovators if the market is taken out of the equation? Do we have a property right in our labor that is taken away if we cannot use the market to establish our own rewards based on their value? Does not the U.S. Constitution itself favor and protect market-based approaches to these issues?

**This possibility** assumes that market-based solutions function most of the time and that reliance on the market should be the rule, not the exception. Government intervention could be conceded for slow-to-respond portions of the market in times of crisis, but that is a matter of emergency response, not ongoing governance. Competition, premiums for creativity, and recognition of skill should continue to carry great weight in rewarding work.

**The possibility allows** that socially responsible goals have a place in the market and that incentives can create value for them that reduces the need for more extensive intervention. Market incentives can help guard against over-concentration of wealth and power, and they can

help support community-based enterprise. Proper functioning of the market could lead to better reconciliation among various slices of the rewards “pie”. These goals can be accomplished with minimal regulatory oversight.

The possibility flows from a vision of a society with great individual liberty. It looks toward outcomes that encourage individual choice, market responsiveness, and pluralism. It takes the position that these goals may be accomplished through major reliance on the profit motive. Incentives reinforce market capabilities and minimal safeguards discourage predatory practices and protect market entry.

**Other perspectives.** You may consider yourself something of a critic of government run programs and still have concerns about gigantic corporate enterprise run amok. You may recall headlines about squandered pension funds, obscene executive compensation, and golden parachutes for those caused job losses for thousands and destruction of communities. You may find the very notion of a “free market” illusionary. You may find concepts like those in this possibility to be the product of self-serving mythologies used by the “haves” against the “have-nots”, a type of civic religion used in an unacknowledged form of class warfare.

Many citizens may find concern about the innovators and risk takers misplaced in a discussion of rewarding work in a democratic society. They may feel that the creative types and the hard chargers always land on their feet and that focusing policy on them is like changing baseball rules to fit the most recent World Series winner. They may feel that this possibility is simply an affirmation of the policies that have already distorted our social, political, and economic life and lowered our standing relative to other developed nations.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Rely on adaptations of market incentives to recognize and reward work and protect individual choice in a democratic market economy.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Many areas of rewarding work have thrived by allowing the market to operate relatively freely. It could easily be claimed that the market is precisely the engine that has permitted us to develop our sense of rewards. It could also be claimed that it is the market that creates the opportunity for the types of wealth generation necessary to providing and distributing other social goods. This possibility proceeds from the position that market incentives can continue to serve these positive functions and can also be more finely tuned to achieve such purposes. It anticipates that not only can market incentives serve the material and monetary sides of rewards, but that we can further develop ways to recognize “value” in non-material, non-monetary types of satisfaction and recognition.
- The possibility leaves most of the heavy lifting of rewards to the private sector because that is the sector with the greatest stake and influence. Under this type of thinking business should take the lead in many areas like health care and education precisely because their long term profitability is deeply implicated in the welfare and quality of the workforce available to them. Current failures to recognize and account for those implications are flaws that can be remedied through helpful incentives.
- This possibility represents a vision within which a democratic society encourages an ongoing dialogue about social responsibility and social entrepreneurship. It uses market incentives to encourage experimentation and development of many choices concerning rewards. It fine tunes its minimal regulation in ways that are highly adaptive and responsive.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Sharpen Incentives

- Integrate reward systems to provide alternate “menus” of rewards
- Encourage mobility and flexibility in work choices
- Stress creativity and innovation in rewards systems
- Encourage risk-taking

Develop Models

- Look to ownership models that encourage self-employment
- Support cooperatives and employee-owned enterprise
- Recognize role models and exemplars of corporate social responsibility

Refine Minimal Oversight

- Look to shorten response time in adjustments to consumer and community input
- Least restrictive regulatory means should still be effective
- Focus on over-concentration and monopolies that harm competition

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- More flexible rewards systems that fit our emerging economy
- More individual choices in employment through not being locked in to old style benefit plans
- More transparency and awareness about rewards systems

# OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

*Nearly everyone has experienced a work environment where organizational structures and management styles actually get in the way of accomplishing the work. Such environments are extremely frustrating and represent incredible lost productivity and loss of human potential. Optimal performance is one way to look how society, employing organizations, and individuals get to the point where work is rewarding.*

**Do you wonder** if those in charge think about much more than staying in charge and maximizing their own rewards? Have you experienced work environments that seem stuck in past practices to the point of organizational decline and low employee morale? Is there a noticeable gap between what organizations state as goals and the paths they pursue in to reach those goals? Have you ever felt that we fall far short of our potential and in the process squander significant amounts of individual, social, and financial capital?

**This possibility** starts from the view that few organizations operate anywhere close to optimal performance. While conceding the imperfection of all endeavors, it embraces optimal performance as a worthy goal to strive for in nearly every setting. Those most interested in this possibility were prompted by concern about poor management practices: from bad habits to “sick organization syndrome”. There was a sense that many sectors of our economy are “hung over” from years of poor management practices.

**Among the concerns** underlying this possibility were strongly felt sentiments about the intrinsic value of work, the potential for personal satisfaction through work, and the notions of “craft”, “vocation”, and “calling”. Those interested in this possibility saw the potential to reconcile and integrate these features of optimal performance. They anticipated that a society devoted to optimal performance would better align its numerical productivity goals and its qualitative goals concerning human potential.

**Employing institutions** and their support networks would look to identify and reduce barriers to optimal performance. Practices, organizational structures, and training requirements that impede optimal performance would be called into question and subjected to

close scrutiny. Best practices would be further developed and adopted where helpful.

**Much of this possibility** would be directed at the management structure of employers. Managers would need to justify their practices based on the needs of healthy and productive organizations, not personal desires to preserve control or perks. All employees, including managers, would be expected to cultivate a spirit of service in their work. Corporations and shareholders would also need to enlarge the view of corporate social responsibility to include optimal performance. The basic vision here is of a highly motivated society devoted to quality, improvement, and personal development.

**Other Views.** You may feel that such a workplace and society would be wonderful places to work and live. You might even think that optimal performance might work for some small groups of highly motivated workers in select organizations with enlightened management.

But you may also imagine your own boss saying “over my dead body” when it comes to reducing or eliminating the barriers that gum up the works at your organization. Others may find this possibility very threatening, even where it offers liberation from drudgery and pointless work. You may feel that those who stress short term profits may not like this approach. They may worry that slackers will take advantage of optimal performance by pointing to poor practices as justification for their own productivity.

You may also wonder if this approach, no matter how well-intended, can be applied to the dirty work that no one wants to do. You may think optimal performance is just another wall between skilled and unskilled work and another way of justifying high rewards to the optimal performers.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Encourage all steps toward the maximization of human potential with views toward improved use of societal resources, better organizational practices, and enhanced individual satisfaction.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Those areas of work that have thrived and produced innovations are those which have abandoned top-down management models and have replaced them with integrated collaborative models. Information and technology have made many management models obsolete. Outmoded work structures and rigid societal frameworks seem to contribute significantly to performance barriers.
- Removal of such barriers benefits the economy and society. Broadening and democratizing responsibilities for performance may also help society and organizations function at a higher level. Development and implementation of optimal performance practices offers an approach to this higher level of functioning for society, organizations, and individuals.
- Optimal performance encourages the integration of knowledge of systems design and human behavior in ways that support the least restrictive work environments and replace hierarchy with networking. Incentives stress the importance of individual choice and individual fulfillment in and through work. The possibility envisions a society where innovation and creation of value are prized for their contributions toward the societal meeting of needs and goals.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Change Structures

- Open organizations to collaborative models
- Widen responsibility for and participation in quality improvement efforts
- Allow information to flow freely between different parts of the organization

Change Practices

- De-emphasize hierarchy and top-down management
- Enlarge assessment procedure beyond quantitative to include qualitative
- Organize human resources and training around development of individual potential

Change Forms of Recognition and Rewards

- Recognize master practitioners in all fields of endeavor for their appreciation of craft and joy in a job well done
- Reward those who bring out the best in the performance of others
- Reward those whose use of innovation and technology enables the organization to provide rewarding and productive work

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Minimize pointless and redundant work and products
- Promote investment in applications of social science understandings of human performance
- Provide a basis for re-thinking the economy in terms of what is necessary and sufficient

## ENHANCED WORKER AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

*Among the features of work that are rewarding, that seem significant to those most involved in their jobs, are the related conditions of belonging, teamwork, and the opportunity to influence events in the work world. This approach to participation involves more than input on work conditions, it opens the door to wider participation in how workplaces are structured and how society views work. A new vision of citizenship would take in more of what we have thought of as private or economic decisions.*

**Do you think** that our society and economy could maintain high productivity even if more people were involved in the decisions that shape the future of work? Do you feel that traditional systems of centralized authority and management prerogatives have not had an impressive track record? Does it seem like many of the “big questions” about work are not asked and that we do not now have effective ways to raise them? Might not a “vote” on your work future be just as important as a vote for an elected official?

**Enhanced worker & citizen participation** is a core democratic concept applied to the economy in “ways that matter.” It flows from a sense that much participation is token involvement or even a distraction from the issues that impact work life. It envisions participation that is interactive and meaningful in terms of directions and outcomes. And it rejects the illusory forms of participation where management-designated “employee reps” rubber stamp management decisions.

**The possibility** encourages forming worker and citizen groups that act to shape the world of work. It gives those groups more standing and power in decision-making arenas. In some cases it may provide for worker and citizen representatives on the governing bodies of businesses and other organizations. Because it recognizes that workers and citizens have not been able to act on the scale of large corporations, it looks toward cooperative and social democratic models that have delivered on promises of improved participation in shaping work rewards.

This possibility relies on ongoing development of new and adaptive ways to improve participation, including broad societal dialogue on meaningful participatory skills. It depends on accessible and intelligible information on relevant work and economic issues. Finally, it calls upon a model

of leadership where more citizens have the opportunity to lead and where leadership creates a shared sense of responsibility.

Under this possibility, the work world is a place where one can challenge traditional thinking about worth and value. It includes human needs that have often been separated from workplace governance. There is an opportunity to place non-material, humanistic, and aesthetic considerations on the table. The vision of this possibility supports more opportunities for democratic participation at all levels that shape the workplace.

**Other views.** Some would insist that this approach would totally destroy the market economy and make it difficult for management to secure a profitable return on investment. They might find this approach to be fundamentally “un-American” and possibly unconstitutional. They may find this approach so offensive that even the most mild and incremental steps in this direction are to be resisted as a dangerous slippery slope.

Even citizens more comfortable with the idea of a “mixed economy” with both private and public actors may still feel that this possibility goes too far. They may feel that this approach raises real concerns that are better handled by representative government and regulation. They may even fear that the possibility could “back fire” by giving in to demands of the moment in ways that harm the long term ability of the economy to reward work.

Still others may feel that this possibility is from a time now past and that the world of work is now simply too complicated and fast moving to be subjected to this type of broad work and citizen participation. They may also feel that adoption of such approaches concedes a no growth or slow growth approach that impedes innovation and much of the new wealth that it has produced.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Workers and citizens would be encouraged and empowered to participate in workplace and societal decision-making and organize to pursue their broad interests in rewarding work.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- The “old economy” was a top-down economy that has left many legacies that are not helpful to enhanced worker and citizen participation. Even where “new economy” success stories suggest the value of broader participation, traditional businesses have been slow to adopt them and governance discussions have been slow to take up these issues. At the same time, increased public knowledge of and outrage at corporate corruption, including squandering of employee benefits, have opened a door to the issues involved in this possibility.
- Worker and citizen participation has many useful forms that may be applied within the public, private, and non-profit sectors. These forms help broaden our sense of what democracy means in a market economy and how an enlarged form of citizenship would play out in the economy in general and in rewarding work in particular. An enlarged cooperative and participatory sphere would be helpful to productivity and individual responsibility in some areas of the economy.
- A broad democratic and participatory approach would provide more scrutiny of economic decisions and greater demands for transparency and information. The scrutiny in turn would in turn curb abuses and increase the leverage of workers and citizens. The hoped for results would be more opportunities worker and citizen contributions to productivity, quality improvement, and community development.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Encourage Organization

- Support formation of local worker and citizen groups that determine and act upon their broad interests
- Facilitate formation of broad alliances of groups that coalesce at regional, national, and international levels
- Grant groups standing in private and public governance settings and guarantee access to decision-making bodies

Create Participatory Opportunities

- Build in worker and citizen participation in corporate charters
- Include worker and citizen representatives on public and regulatory bodies
- Grant preferences for cooperative and employee-owned enterprise

Redesign Participation

- Assume participatory forms in all start-ups, performance reviews, and reorganizations
- Develop participatory best practices
- Require participatory training and development in leadership, management, and administrative positions

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Raise expectations about participatory process and practice in all areas of life
- Creation of broad-based groups that go beyond occupational lines and employment status
- Capability of those broad-based groups to counter the influence of concentrated wealth and power

# REINVIGORATED REGULATION TO PROTECT REWARDS

*Protection of rewards has often been a matter for government intervention and standards. The Industrial Revolution and the social movements that accompanied it gave rise to many forms of protections that secured benefits and rights. Later trends toward “de-regulation” eroded some of these protections and the failure to provide adequate resources makes other protections hollow. Reinvigorated regulation could deal with many of the basic issues involved in rewarding work.*

**Do you think** that we have lost ground in recent decades in terms of protecting rewards? Does it seem that a “love affair with market solutions” undermined many traditional protections of rewards? Do you think that these anti-regulation trends may fall within a political agenda of interests that benefit from lower wages and benefits and a less empowered work force? Does reinvigorated regulation, with adequate resources and political will for enforcement, offer a path toward improved protection of rewards?

**This possibility embraces regulation** as a widely understood model of protecting rewards. Regulation is both familiar and expected in areas where power disparities leave individuals and groups at the mercy of larger interests. Project discussion produced a sense that the political pendulum had swung too far in the direction of unregulated relationships and have left rewards vulnerable. This sense was also accompanied by a feeling that reinvigorated regulation offers one of most practical ways to achieve protections in the short term.

The possibility flows from observations that regulation had not only fallen out of favor politically, but that other unhelpful trends undermined its vitality and legitimacy. There was a sense that regulatory effectiveness had fallen off. There was concern that many regulatory agencies seemed under the control of the interests they were supposed to regulate. Even concerning relatively effective areas of regulation, there was concern over excessive bureaucracy and “distance” from citizens that make regulatory agencies less approachable and less credible as a tool for protecting rewards.

**Reinvigorated regulation** builds upon already existing frameworks. In some cases it restores past practice. In other cases it refurbishes existing but ignored protections. It also acts to enlarge

the space for regulatory action by producing results that protect rewards, reduce insecurity, and insure fairness. The possibility relies on swift and proportionate remedies that are simple to understand and implement. The regulation it calls for may not only protect rewards, but may provide more generalized “steering” for related social and economic ends. It also provides the forum and mechanism for participation and dissemination of information about protections of work rewards. The possibility envisions a regulatory framework that is “worker friendly” in most all respects and that protects benefits and rights as a public trust – on par with public safety.

**Other Perspectives.** You may feel that this possibility represents the past and can be dismissed with a “been there, done that” response. You might even feel that regulation was appropriate for that past, but would now hurt more than help. Your concerns may have to do with adapting to a global economy and the need to remain competitive, and that static systems of protections cannot keep pace.

Related to rapid change may be the sinking feeling that bureaucracy is not suited to deal with “high tech” sectors and the need for innovation to fuel growth. You may wonder how regulation can deal with the remnants of the “old economy” and help birth the “new economy”. You may even think that the new economy can only rise to its true potential if government basically stays out of the way. You may think that government lacks the imagination to deal with what is emerging and will recognize it only after it is far too late to do much about it.

It could be that you feel we need far more profound change. You may be looking to transform relationships and challenge basic assumptions about rewards. Regulation may fall short of those desires.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Rewards for work would be protected through governance supports for reinvigorated regulation on behalf of work-related benefits and rights.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Regulation once was the primary means of protecting the rewards of work. Labor protections, in the form of laws relating to collective bargaining, pension protections, wages and hours, and occupational safety and health were among the areas of regulation that were weakened through time. At the height of U.S. prosperity after World War Two regulatory protections of rewards for work were relatively strong and effective. There was also a sense that regulation could meet the new challenges in the area of civil rights in the workplace.
- Regulatory agencies themselves over time came to be seen as less effective and less responsive to concerns of workers. Political shifts in the U.S. made regulation in general a target and created a climate where worker protections were dismantled or made less effective. In this situation both the material rewards and rights of workers have seen steady erosion for over three decades.
- Reinvigorated regulation may be helpful in reversing these trends and managing the employer excesses that have resulted from them. It will promote a climate of more rigorous oversight and enforcement. It will be more sensitive to market failures and manage risks in ways that insure rewards in cases of market failures. The intended result is a rewards environment where benefits and rights are safeguarded against market fluctuations.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Rebuild Regulatory Capacity

- Require sufficient staffing and resource allocation to support effective regulation
- Train and develop professional regulators within an ethic of service to the common good
- Build in safeguards against conflicts of interest and cooptation by regulated interests

Rigorous Oversight and Enforcement

- Invoke strong sanctions on the serious violations of work-related benefits and rights
- Expand regulatory power to monitor and intervene
- Coordinate regulatory efforts in ways similar to a law enforcement “task force”

Upgrade and Update Regulatory Approaches

- Provide incentives and supports for individuals and their representatives to institute regulatory action
- Facilitate closer cooperation between regulatory bodies and the scientific and social science communities
- Expand access to regulatory information that bears on issues of rewards

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Spur innovations to reach regulatory goals in more efficient ways
- Generate challenges to entrenched interests
- Better management of “excesses” and less disruption of rewards

## A COVENANT FOR SOCIAL PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS AND RIGHTS

*U.S. citizens have some notion of a “social compact” that arose from New Deal attempts to deal with the suffering of the Great Depression. But many observers would note that these efforts were not as extensive as the systems of social insurance that were implemented in most developed democracies. Current threats to economic security create the political space in which to raise the possibility of a societal agreement to meet certain basic needs and treat the meeting of those needs as fundamental rights.*

**Do you wonder** why we cannot seem to work out some of the basic ways of taking care of our citizens in ways that other nations do, like health care coverage for all? Does it occur to you that some of these basic social benefits are not “welfare,” but rather are efficient and stable means of maintained a compassionate and civilized society? Is it possible that political blinders have preventing us from seeing the competitive and economic advantages to guaranteeing social benefits outside of work?

**This possibility arises** from a sense that we are long overdue in providing basic security needs to citizens through more stable means than job benefits. Aside from the inherent inequalities resulting from differences in the leverage of different job sectors, jobs themselves are no longer stable, and workers are likely to be employed in many different settings during their work life.

The U.S. is capable of designing social insurance systems that widen the safety net and provide security. Such a system would help job mobility, willingness to relocate, and willingness to retrain. No longer would workers feel chained to bad jobs because of benefits. Providing for basic needs would also enlarge the safety net to deal with threats such as hunger and homelessness.

Such a covenant would need to develop out of a broad social understanding of what basic needs and rights should be included. This would include employer recognition of the advantages of getting out of the “benefit business” and removing benefits from “price competition.”

**Discussion of needs and rights** would get to the core issues and values about how we see ourselves in community with those dislocated by the shifts and turns of the global economy. This discussion would deal with the tough choices

between what is needed and what is affordable. It would also likely look for starting points of great urgency, like health care, and build upon such experiences to develop not only administrative expertise, but also better consensus about helpful basic minimums of social support.

This possibility represents a vision of social provision of needs and a guarantee of rights through an ongoing public dialogue about how to deal with our present and future security needs. The agreement that comes out of this dialogue is subject to change and adjustment, but would represent our best understanding of our mutual responsibilities toward one another.

**Other Interpretations.** You may believe that this approach represents the choice that many European nations have made and that it is a choice that stifles innovation and growth. You may feel that such an approach runs against the grain of the American character and would undermine the work ethic and self-reliance. You may even feel that the transfer of benefits from the work sphere to the public sphere will give workers less reason to be productive and excel.

Perhaps you feel that such approaches can work only in smaller, more homogeneous societies and that it won’t work in a large, complex, and pluralistic nation with many regional economies with different needs. Our history of racial and immigrant resentments may add difficulties to any effort to provide generally available social benefits.

Or you may feel that this idea comes at a bad time. The economic crisis is sapping our ability to pay for ambitious social benefits and our growing debt is imposing tremendous costs on future generations. The taxes required for even small steps in this direction may cause more businesses to flee.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Engage the public in a broad dialogue about meeting basic needs and protecting basic rights that leads to a societal agreement on the public responsibility to provide such protections.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Globalization, technological innovation, deregulation, privatization and other rapid changes in the economy have created conditions not foreseen under past approaches to “benefits” and “employment rights”. These conditions have led to a significant increase in feelings of insecurity and lack of attachment to specific employers. The collapse of industries that are dominant in certain regions can devastate entire communities. The financial obligations created by health and retirement benefits have made many businesses uncompetitive.
- This possibility looks to reopen the questions of how we provide basic social protections. It approaches the matter as one that society must examine and design and adjust from time to time. This examination would include such matters as our priorities in providing social protections and our decisions about what can be afforded. The result would be an agreement among our citizens about the responsibilities we owe each other and that states our intent to honor that agreement.
- This policy represents a major shift in how we approach rewards and would likely lead to the transfer of many rewards from individual employment benefits to socially guaranteed protections. It represents a vision of society where there is less pressure to take work based on benefits and where benefits are not lost through job loss or job change.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Building Agreement

- Public conversation on what is included in basic needs and rights
- Protections and gap coverage of benefits during transition from old system to new system
- Relieve businesses of benefit costs through reorganizations and incentives for competition

Determining Basic Needs and Rights

- Set a starting point basic need like universal health care or retirement security
- Use science and social science to determine other useful minimums of social supports
- Focus initially on most vulnerable individuals and populations like children and the elderly

Adjusting the Agreement

- Recognize and reward non-employment and non-business contributions to the community
- Focus on broad improvements to public well-being and productivity
- Gradually expand agreement to right to sustenance, shelter, and safety

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Democratize rewards by leading to redistribution of benefits and reduction of disparities between workers
- Lower barriers to participation in society and free up creative potential
- Mobility of labor will start to match that of capital

## LEARNING ABOUT WORK: ECONOMIC & CIVIC LITERACY

*Citizens and workers often seem at a disadvantage when attempting to understand the complexities of the economy and how they might act in governance forums to represent their interests. Policy issues concerning work and its rewards are not always straightforward and the connections between general economic conditions and rewards are not always apparent. Learning about work needs to be broadly framed in ways that provide workers and citizens the tools they need to participate in decisions about rewards and general economic governance.*

**Does it seem** as if major economic decisions are made behind a curtain that you cannot see through? Do you feel that you and your fellow citizens have all the tools and information needed to understand the basic issues involved in your job and the broader economy? Do you fear that inadequate preparation for such issues harms individuals and society? Do you sense that democracy itself is impaired when we do not grasp the fundamentals of how rewards work in our society?

The concept of learning about work flows from a multi-layered approach to what could be useful in making the many decisions that must be made in relation to work and in relation to our economic governance. This includes what sort of work to prepare for, when to transition to other work, how to select benefits, when to retire and so forth. But it also implicates what sort of collective action to engage in with those similarly situated and what sorts of policies might best serve your interests.

**This possibility** assumes that informed choice is an important feature of democratic governance. It also assumes that there are interests who would just as soon not share the information that leads to informed choices and who may prefer to distract others from fundamental issues. This possibility suggests that democracy cannot function properly where choices are impaired through poor information and a poor grasp of conditions.

**Discussion** of this possibility suggests that the information and education needs of citizenship and the workplace overlap in significant ways. Many of the fundamental questions facing individuals, groups, and communities are economic questions or have significant economic dimensions. Many of the tools and means to provide this type of learning already exist in some form, and

information technologies offer even more means of encouraging economic and civic literacy.

This possibility envisions a society where we encourage a more fully informed citizenry. We would discourage the notion of shaping views through marketing. We would expose incidents where the manipulation of information have served to promote narrow interests. We would build an information and education framework that allows us to see the connection of individual interests and long-term collective interests.

**Other views.** You may feel that more information about the details of benefit administration and labor economics is the last thing that most ordinary workers want or need. You may feel that the complexity of such material will make it too difficult to understand and that attempts to simplify it will simply lead to more confusion and poor choices. Your view may be based on a rejection of the idea that efforts to conceal information or mislead citizens and workers are a source of difficulty.

You may be concerned that this possibility has a hidden agenda of spreading suspicion and stoking resentment. You may see it as a thinly-veiled “class warfare” tool meant to capitalize on isolated incidents of corporate abuses. You may see little good coming from the possibility, but see much potential harm as it makes citizens and workers distrustful of everything they are told.

You may sense that even sincere attempts to provide relevant and helpful information may be in vain. You may project that this possibility will add to our society’s “information overload.” Your view may be based on the view that information is becoming more transparent through the internet and any attempt to subject this natural process to policy will simply gum it up.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Support increased and improved efforts to prepare citizens and workers to understand societal conditions relating to work and the economy and to exercise informed choice in the governance of those conditions.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- Workers have seen large businesses collapse practically overnight, taking jobs, benefits, and enormous pension funds with them. Communities have witnessed economic devastation resulting from corporate flight, even when they have given in to every request for tax breaks and competitive incentives. In the wake of such things those harmed often struggle to understand what happened and why.
- In dynamic areas of the economy, it is sometimes hard for workers to understand how rewards are undergoing transformation and what their best choices might be. It can be difficult to understand how current skills will translate into future prospects and how to best position oneself in the economy. In difficult economic times it can be even more difficult to chart an approach to protecting one's savings and retirement funds.
- This possibility looks to provide additional assistance to citizens and workers in facing these dilemmas and making difficult choices. It recognizes that there are no guarantees and no crystal balls with which to accurately predict all outcomes in the economy. But this possibility does express hope and faith that improved education of citizens and workers about economic and job issues can prove helpful in protecting rewards for work. This possibility would not only provide help in making individual work and benefit decisions, but would provide the basis for more informed citizen participation in governance relating to the economy.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Economic and Civic Literacy

- Develop easily understood basic information on the economy for citizens and workers
- Develop particular information for workers on benefits and rights
- Develop civic action information that helps translate economic issues to governance choices

Lifelong Education

- Adapt existing education programs to the mission, relying on successful models in university extensions, vocational and technical colleges, and adult continuing education
- Create new category of "work life" educators who function at the community and worksite level
- Require existing business and labor institutions to disclose information relating to rewards

Decision-making Assistance

- Help citizens and workers find and evaluate information relating to the economy and rewards for work
- Provide workers with the tools to select and train for jobs
- Provide citizens with the tools to understand and develop locally-based economic alternatives and the political actions needed to sustain them

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- More careful consideration of many work issues, along with more willingness to change when appropriate
- Contribution to a sense of "citizenship craft" at work and in the community
- More differentiation between facts and opinions; more hopeful governance and less manipulation

## VALUE AND BALANCE TIME

*American workers are thought to be among the most “overworked” workers in the world. U.S. cultural values have long stressed work, sometimes assigning high moral standing to hard work and diminished standing to leisure. Guaranteed vacations and generous family leave are seen as “European” benefits corrosive to productivity. Yet, the stress levels in the U.S. workforce seem to take a toll on families and communities. Institutions that depend on volunteers to perform “good works” suffer and meaningful participation in governance continues to decline. Perhaps we need to place more value on our time and balance work with other parts of our lives?*

**Do you feel hurried and hassled** as you move from task to task? Does your cell phone or blackberry extend your work day into a “24/7” affair? Do commutes and other travel for errands eat up a big chunk of your day? Does your job offer sufficient time off in order to restore and recharge your energy and creative juices? Does poor organization and management at work rob you of time and make you less productive? Do the multiple demands on your time leave anything left over for recreation and civic involvement?

**Many citizens feel** that our drive to remain competitive in the global economy has come at tremendous individual, family, and community costs. One might go as far as to say that we as a society disrespect time and create “busyness” that is neither productive for the economy nor helpful for personal growth. This possibility looks to reverse that trend and make us more mindful of time as a precious personal and social commodity.

This possibility flows from a sense that this disrespect undermines leisure’s positive contributions to community, health, and creative effort. It proceeds from a sense that overwork, inefficiency, lack of helpful community planning, poor individual choices, and oppressive conditions combine to aggravate time pressures. It allows that these time pressures threaten individual and societal well-being. It sees evidence of these threats in lower participation rates in civic affairs, community service groups, and fraternal organizations.

**The vision** represented by this possibility looks to heighten regard for time away from work, to balance that time with work demands, and to protect personal time from abuse and exploitation. Leisure would be viewed as an asset or resource

that could be distributed more equitably in the same way that goods and services might be. The society that values this possibility would treat time spent on contributions to community life with the same regard as work time.

**Other Perspectives.** You might feel that this possibility would eliminate the one of the competitive advantages enjoyed by the U.S. economy. From this perspective, a heavy drag on productivity could result from fewer hours worked. The lowered hours worked and reduced productivity might also deepen the problems we face in paying for the social benefits of retiring baby boomers.

You might worry that this possibility represents one step further away from the protestant work ethic that permitted the U.S. to become the leading economic power. In this view more leisure could lead to a lazy and decadent society. It might cause our competitors to take us less seriously and undermine our position in the world in ways beyond gross domestic product.

Finally, you may even think that the possibility deserves eventual and gradual consideration and still feel that now is not the time. You may feel that the current economic crisis requires higher productivity, increased personal savings and investment, and commitment to rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure. You may feel that these emergency needs will make it difficult if not impossible to increase leisure time. You may even feel that the very notion of increased leisure time threatens the sense of social solidarity and shared sacrifice necessary to confront economic difficulties.

**Outline of the Possibility:** Develop a heightened regard for leisure time, balance it with work time, and implement protections that safeguard that regard and enforce that balance.

**Thinking behind the Possibility:**

- The campaign for the eight-hour day was one of the most significant work-related movements to occur in our society. Yet, now, over a hundred years later the idea of a reasonable time commitment in exchange for a living wage is treated as an oddity and luxury. Many at the bottom rungs of society need to work multiple jobs to support themselves and even strong groups of employees with collective bargaining tools find it difficult to resist mandatory overtime.
- The discussions behind this possibility found it important to challenge situations where some are overworked while others have no work at all. They felt strongly that leisure adds social and economic dividends in many ways, including the recreation and entertainment portions of the economy. They found the idea of restorative time to be an essential part of the physical and mental health profile of society.
- This possibility expresses the concept of value and balance of time as both a practical and humane approach to resource distribution in our society. It treats time as a quality of life issue and a rights issue. It looks toward a change in attitude on the part of individuals, groups, businesses, and government so that overwork is not seen as morally superior or normal. It looks to alleviate suffering in the worst cases of “time theft” and to inspire participation and creative contributions through its implementation.

**Possible Approaches to the Possibility:**

Change thinking about time

- Value service to others and community on same level as work and allow work leave for volunteering or participating
- Build recreational and “wellness” time into the work day
- Encourage “sabbaticals” that support the arts and humanities and allow leaves of absence to pursue education

Distribute work differently

- Develop and implement forms of “job-sharing” throughout the economy
- Encourage telecommuting and teleconferencing in order to discourage unnecessary travel
- Integrate economic development and housing planning so it is easier to live near where you work

Protect time from abuse

- Provide minimum vacation and family support time
- Restrict mandatory overtime
- Protect vulnerable workers where fatigue raises critical safety and health issues

**Possible Consequences of the Possibility:**

- Provide significant support for the “knowledge economy” and technological development
- Cultivate a different set of management skills and restructure “time wasting” organizations
- Increase personal and collective awareness about how we plan and use our time



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## **An Open Invitation to Further Discussion & Interactivity**

We hope that you will use this report to carry forward the discussion begun by our project panels.

We have developed a discussion process that may be helpful for groups interested in discussing the ideas presented in our reports or in discussing matters of public interest more generally. We have also developed facilitation and discussion guidebooks to assist in the planning and conduct of these discussions. These materials, as well copies of this and other Interactivity Foundation reports, may be downloaded from our website (listed below). You can also obtain additional printed copies of any of our publications (at no cost) by sending us a request that briefly indicates their intended use. See the contact information listed below.

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Finally, we welcome your comments, ideas, and other feedback about this report, its possibilities, any of our publications, or our discussion processes.

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