One-Stop Shop: Think Tank Joins Forces With Cornell To Provide Premier Gig Economy Data Hub

Insights

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The Aspen Institute's Future of Work Initiative has partnered with Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) to introduce the "Gig Economy Data Hub." Set to launch this spring, the database aims to serve as a comprehensive source of the knowns and unknowns of the gig economy.

While it is renowned that millions of Americans are working freelance jobs on an independent basis, the exact size of the gig economy is relatively unknown. Estimates of these figures vary from less than one percent to over 40 percent of the workforce.

Such discrepancies are likely the result of widely contrasting definitions of "independent work." More restrictive sources only consider online-platforms—such as Uber or Lyft—as independent work. Other studies count almost any non-traditional employment as independent work, inflating gig economy statistics.

The Gig Economy Data Hub will seek to eliminate these inconsistencies and synthesize information usable by policymakers, employers, and employees alike. Early identified topics include the size, makeup, growth rate, and history of the gig economy.

On February 2, the two partners conducted a roundtable discussion on the Gig Economy Data Hub. Approximately 40 leaders from elite universities, think tanks, worker advocate organizations, and gig economy enterprises were in attendance. Participants provided comments on a beta version of the database in preparation for the upcoming launch.

So what does this mean for the gig economy? As institutions like the ILR School—with roots deeply embedded in traditional labor—begin shifting focus towards the independent workforce, the gig economy will only move more and more into the spotlight. This partnership, combined with the upcoming Bureau of Labor Statistics Contingent Worker Survey, brings us closer than ever to understanding the true prevalence and enormity of the gig economy.