

LER TOOLKIT CASE STUDY COLLECTION

Scaling Skills-Based Pathways in Indiana with Western Governors University (WGU)

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Indiana's statewide LER initiative, led by Western Governors University (WGU), is building a learner-centered digital credential ecosystem to advance skills-based hiring and equitable economic mobility. The pilot equips *Hoosiers*, especially adult learners, veterans, and career changers, with verifiable, modular skills-based credentials stored in a learner-owned wallet, enabling them to showcase their skills across education and employment systems. By aligning open standards, public-private partnerships, and usability-focused design, the initiative sets a national example for how states can scale an inclusive credentialing infrastructure for the future.

Case Study Details

Scope: Indiana

Sector: Various

Industry: Pathways

Focus: Scaling skills-based pathways

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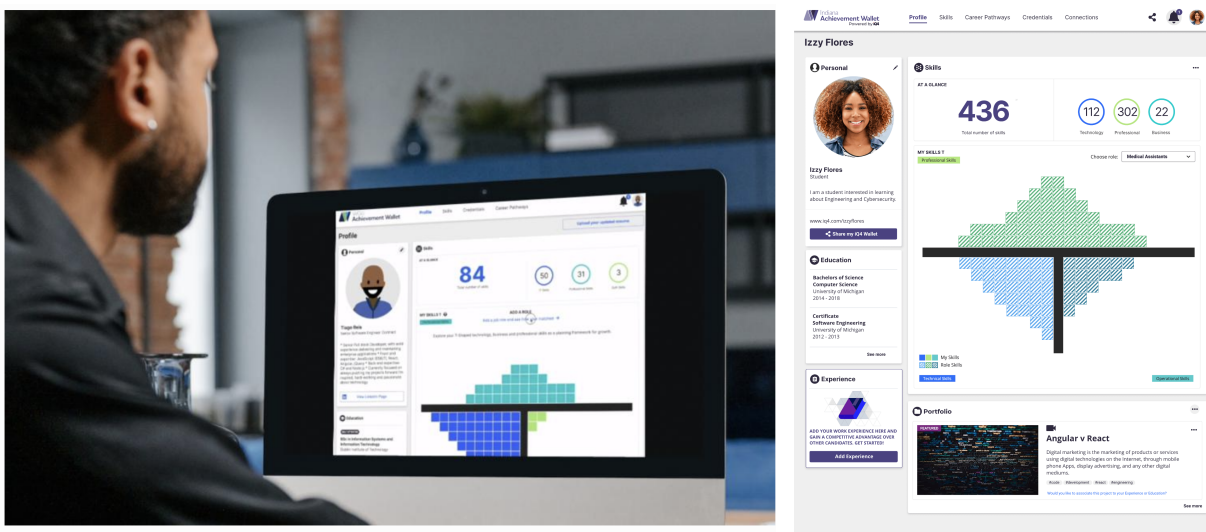
Introduction

The need for more effective ways to capture, communicate, and connect learning to work is growing urgent. Traditional transcripts and resumes rarely reflect the full range of knowledge, skills, and competencies people gain through formal education, on-the-job experience, and professional development. Recognizing this, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education partnered with Western Governors University (WGU) to scale a statewide Learning and Employment Record (LER) system that centers learners, recognizes skills, and enables real-world opportunity. The cornerstone of this effort is the Achievement Wallet—a learner-owned digital profile designed to bridge the gap between education and employment and transform how we recognize and reward human potential.

Scaling Skills-based Pathways

The Achievement Wallet is more than a credential repository; it is a dynamic, user-controlled tool that allows individuals to collect and present skills gained through formal and informal learning. Deployed by WGU to education partners in Indiana, it includes features for:

- ❖ **Verifying** academic credentials, industry certifications, and soft skills
- ❖ **Uploading** skill demonstrations in multiple formats (e.g., sales presentations, writing samples, publications)
- ❖ **Mapping** career paths and identifying skill gaps
- ❖ **Connecting** directly to job opportunities



Source: Western Governors University

In Indiana, the Achievement Wallet was supported over time by a strategic coalition of partners, including Western Governors University (WGU), Ivy Tech Community College, Purdue Global, Goodwill of Southern & Central Indiana, National Student Clearinghouse, iQ4, Skillful Indiana, and others. This statewide initiative leverages WGU's modular credentialing model, which breaks learning into competencies and microcredentials aligned with employer needs. Credentials are structured using open standards and published to the Credential Engine registry for transparency, discoverability, and interoperability.

Participant Engagement

WGU and its partners implemented equity-centered design practices, engaging diverse learners across Indiana, working parents, military veterans, and career-changers, to test usability, relevance, and impact.

The initiative engaged:

- ❖ **Learners:** WGU students and working learners at Ivy Tech, Purdue Global, and community-based programs
- ❖ **Employers:** across several sectors, representing both large and smaller employers
- ❖ **State and Education Agencies:** Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Indiana Department of Workforce Development, postsecondary institutions
- ❖ **Technology and Ecosystem Partners:** iQ4, IBM, Credential Engine, Skillful Indiana, National Student Clearinghouse
- ❖ **Community Support:** Goodwill of Southern & Central Indiana, local workforce boards, career navigators

Through listening sessions and pilot testing, learners provided feedback that shaped wallet design, credential clarity, and data sharing controls.

Technical Implementation

Indiana's LER ecosystem was developed around open, scalable, and learner-centric technologies. The product stack and credential model are outlined below.

- ❖ **WGU Achievement Wallet:** A web-based, responsive platform where learners control and curate their educational and employment records, developed with partner iQ4
- ❖ **Credential Interoperability:** the wallet supports W3C Verifiable Credentials (VC), Open Badges 3.0, OB 2.0 badges, and additional skills information using Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL)
- ❖ **AI and Skills Intelligence:** AI tools within the wallet identify skills, match learners to jobs, and surface relevant career pathways

- ❖ **Credential Registry Integration:** Credentials are published to the Credential Engine registry using CTDL and CTIDs, ensuring consistent structure and rich metadata
- ❖ **Multi-Format Capability:** Wallets support verified and self-attested records, including digital badges, video demonstrations, and external achievements

Product Stack

Product Name	Role(s)
WGU/iQ4 Issuer Dashboard	Issuer
WGU Achievement Wallet	Holder credential management
Verifier Plus	Verifier

Credential Model

Category	Implementation
Verifiable Credential Data Model Version	VCDM 1.1
Credential Specification	Open Badges 3.0

Interoperability is critical for verifiable LER credentials and wallet solutions to ensure that the credentials and data can be understood, trusted, and accepted across systems. We invited the project team to share a detailed interoperability profile of the technical specifications and protocol choices they made. A complete interoperability profile is available in the appendix.

Key Findings

Insights from initial pilots and testing have revealed the following key findings:

- **Comprehensive skills representation** improves learner confidence and job readiness.
- **Employers value** real-time, verifiable skill profiles and clearer visibility into candidate capabilities.
- **Learners benefit** from control and customization, including the ability to tag artifacts, add context, and manage privacy.
- **Credential interoperability** across institutions strengthens trust and portability, yet is complex to deploy.
- **AI-driven job matching and skills navigation** help learners identify immediate opportunities and long-term pathways.

Challenges and Opportunities

Some of the challenges and opportunities identified from the project include:

Challenges	Opportunities
❖ Limited employer familiarity with wallet-based credentials and how to assess them ❖ Variable credential quality and alignment across sectors, institutions, and lived experiences ❖ Learners with low digital fluency need targeted onboarding and support	❖ Integrate wallets with state workforce systems, job boards, and college application portals Educate employers through chambers, HR networks, and state partnerships. ❖ Advance credentialing reform using CTDL across education and workforce programs. ❖ Expand the ecosystem to include apprenticeships, licensure, and military transitions.

Recommendations

Recommendations for next steps from the project include:

- ❖ **Center learners in design and deployment**, from credential taxonomy to data permissions.
- ❖ **Equip employers with tools and training** for interpreting and verifying wallet contents.
- ❖ **Align credentialing standards statewide** using open protocols and shared frameworks.
- ❖ **Build infrastructure for long-term governance** across public and private stakeholders.
- ❖ **Secure and sustain public-private funding models** for continued scale and innovation.

Conclusion

The Indiana Achievement Wallet pilot represents a national model for scalable, equitable digital credential ecosystems. By bridging education and employment through a skills-based, learner-owned solution, Indiana and WGU have taken a critical step toward modernizing how we recognize and reward learning. With open standards, rich data architecture, and a commitment to learner agency, the Achievement Wallet is not just a technical solution; it's an equity-driven infrastructure for a future of work where everyone's skills count.

Sources

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Attribution

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People	Organizations	Funders
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Appendix: Interoperability Profile

Project teams shared information about the open standards and protocols they used to support interoperability and integration of the end-to-end experience.

Category	Item	Implementation
Product Stack	Issuer Product(s)	WGU iQ4 Issuer Dashboard
	Holder Credential Management Product(s)	WGU Achievement Wallet
	Verifier Product(s)	Exported credentials are verifiable within DCC VerifierPlus, among others.
Identifiers	Issuer Identifier Type	did:key
	Holder Identifier Type	Hashed email address included as OB 3.0 subject identifier.
	Verifier Identifier Type	None
Credential Model	VC Data Model Version	VCDM 1.1
	Credential Specification	Open Badges 3.0
	Skill Alignment	OB Alignment to URL
	Metadata Extensions (e.g., CTDL)	Skills and competencies published in CTDL linked data
	Skills Library or Framework Used	WGU Skills Library
Security	VC Proof Type / Cryptosuite	Data Integrity Proof with eddsa-rdfc-2022 cryptosuite.
	Credential Status Method	Bitstring Status List 1.0
	Credential Expiration	None
	Credential Refresh Method	None

Category	Item	Implementation
	Issuer Authority Confirmation	None
Authentication	Holder Authentication Method	Email address verification using OB 3.0 hashed identifier.
Delivery	Delivery Protocol to Holder	Export JSON-LD
	VC Export Options	Download JSON-LD
	Presentation Protocol Supported	None
Registries & Discovery	Issuer Registry	None
	Verifier Registry	None

Source: This Interoperability Profile Template was developed by LWYL Studio from interoperability frameworks developed by Project Unicorn, 2023; CBEN, 2022; SkillsFWD, 2024; EDL, 2024; and LWYL Studio, 2025.