

LER TOOLKIT CASE STUDY COLLECTION

Scaling Skills-Based Pathways in Alabama through the Talent Triad

Prepared By:

Emily Scheines, Amber Garrison-Duncan (C-BEN), Nathan Rankin (AL OEWS), Greg DiDonato, Kristin Delwo (EBSCOed), and Kelly Page (LWYL Studio).

September 2025

This case study provides an overview of the Alabama Talent Triad. This statewide, skills-based marketplace connects job seekers with education and career opportunities. Supported by the Alabama Department of Workforce, EBSCOed, and C-BEN, the Triad leverages validated and self-attested Learning and Employment Records (LERs) in a free digital wallet, Alabama Credential Registry, and skills-based hiring employer tools to modernize state economic and labor force participation. It expands opportunity across sectors and in-demand occupations, as well as life and career stages.

Case Study Details

Scope: Alabama

Sector(s): All sectors and in-demand occupations as recognized by the Alabama Department of Workforce

Industry: Pathways

Focus: Scaling Skills-based Pathways

Citation: Scheines, E., Garrison-Duncan, A., Rankin, N., DiDonato, G., Delwo, K., and Page, K (2025). *Scaling Skills-Based Pathways in Alabama through the Talent Triad*, LER Toolkit Case Study Collection, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF), September 2025.

Introduction

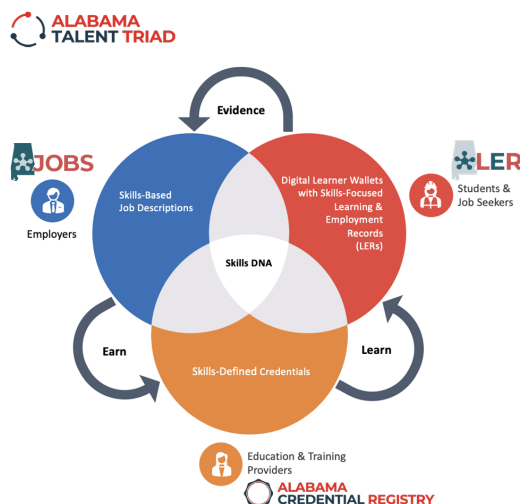
Alabama is pioneering a transformative approach to economic growth and labor force participation with the Alabama Talent Triad, a comprehensive, skills-based talent marketplace supported by the Alabama Department of Workforce, EBSCOed, and the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN). This initiative leverages validated and self-attested Learning and Employment Records (LERs) to bridge the gap between job seekers, employers, and educational institutions, aiming to scale statewide career pathways and opportunities across all sectors and in-demand occupations within Alabama. The Talent Triad aligns Alabama's education and workforce development goals, including increasing the state's labor force participation rate.

Scaling Skills-based Pathways

The Alabama Talent Triad (See Figure 1.) focuses on aligning education and workforce development to meet the demands of all industries and in-demand occupations within the state. Launched in April 2023, the Talent Triad pilot introduced an integrated platform comprising three core components, which continue to expand in their features, functionality, and benefits to meet the identified needs of all stakeholders.

1. **Alabama Credential Registry:** An online repository of degree and non-degree education and training programs & pathways. It includes skills and experiences, education providers, programs, requirements, and other metadata associated with each credential.
2. **Skills-Based Job Description Generator and Employer Portal:** A tool enabling employers to create job descriptions based on specific skill requirements, facilitating better alignment with job seekers' competencies, while also recommending candidates to employers.
3. **Digital Wallet with LERs:** A personal, portable record for individuals to manage and share their validated and self-attested skills, credentials, and experiences. The digital wallet also supports personalized job recommendations, resume building, and learning recommendations.

Figure 1. Alabama Talent Triad



Source: Alabama Talent Triad

Participant Engagement

The Talent Triad's development was marked by active stakeholder engagement through legislatively appointed committees and workforce infrastructure to facilitate shared visioning and actions in every region of the state. Employers, educators, and learners were involved from the beginning, ensuring the platform addressed real-world needs. This collaborative approach has created a shared language around skills and competencies, enhancing the platform's relevance and usability. Employers contributed to defining job competencies, while educational institutions aligned curricula to meet these skill requirements, ensuring that learners' educational experiences translated effectively into workforce readiness.

Technical Implementation

The Talent Triad's infrastructure, developed by EBSCOed, is built on interoperable, open/linked data systems:

- ❖ **Credential Registry:** Compatible with the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) to standardize credential information.
- ❖ **Competency Ontology:** A state-curated ontology comprising multiple skills frameworks to define the "occupational DNA" of jobs, linking skills to credentials and employment opportunities.
- ❖ **Digital Wallets:** Wallets allow people to manage their LERs, facilitating connections between job seekers and employers.

The system supports single sign-on access, ensuring user-friendly experiences for all participants. The product stack and credential model are outlined below.

Credentials are primarily issued to learners by synchronizing records from other systems serving Alabama residents, including state data systems for higher education and adult learning. Learners can export validated digital credentials for each achievement sourced from their records in these connected systems. Students, jobseekers, employers and education & training providers use the Alabama Talent Triad website to make connections between credentials, people, and jobs.

Product Stack

Product Name	Role(s)
Alabama Talent Triad Based on EBSCOed's talent management platform	Issuer, Holder credential management (integrated), Credential Registry (integrated), Verifier (integrated)

Credential Model

Category	Implementation
Verifiable Credential Data Model Version	VCDM 1.1
Credential Specification	Open Badges 3.0, Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR) 2.0

Interoperability is critical for Verifiable 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

By August 2024, the pilot engaged over 19,800 learners with verified LERs and collaborated with 3,290 high schools, colleges, and workforce partners. Several key findings emerged from the program. These included:

- ❖ **Enhanced Job Matching:** Employers reported improved efficiency in identifying candidates whose skills closely matched job requirements.
- ❖ **Increased Credential Transparency:** The Alabama Credential Registry provided a comprehensive view of available credentials and their associated competencies, aiding learners and employers.
- ❖ **Empowered Learners:** Individuals gained greater control over their career trajectories through access to verified LERs, facilitating targeted upskilling and job applications.

By the end of July 2025, the Alabama Talent Triad has scaled to issuing 125,729 validated Learning & Employment Records containing 226,876 validated credentials and 2,041,884 skills. The Talent Triad is also now implementing more than 10,000 open job opportunities from 1,585 employers. All of this work has resulted in 13,080 recommended candidates and 25,400 recommended jobs.

These outcomes indicate the Talent Triad's potential to streamline workforce development and enhance employment outcomes.

Challenges and Opportunities

Every program is not without its challenges. Some of the challenges and opportunities identified from the experience include:

Challenges	Opportunities
❖ Adoption Hurdles: Some employers and institutions were initially hesitant to transition to a skills-based hiring model, requiring cultural and procedural shifts. ❖ Data Integration: Ensuring interoperability among diverse data systems posed technical challenges.	❖ Policy Alignment: The state's leadership provided a conducive environment for policy reforms supporting skills-based education and hiring. ❖ Scalability: The success of the Talent Triad offers a replicable model for other states aiming to modernize and unify their workforce development systems.

Recommendations

Recommendations for next steps from the program include:

- **Expand Stakeholder Engagement:** Continue to expand employer, educator, and learner engagement to ensure the solution is meeting all stakeholder needs and opportunities.

- **Invest in Training and Marketing:** Provide resources and marketing to facilitate how a skills-based and unified approach is advantageous to all stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem.
- **Enhance Data Systems:** Strengthen interoperability and data-sharing protocols to ensure seamless integration across education and workforce platforms.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement robust evaluation frameworks to assess the Talent Triad's impact and inform continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The Alabama Talent Triad represents a significant advancement in aligning education and workforce development through a skills-based approach. By leveraging LERs and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, the initiative has created a dynamic ecosystem that enhances employment opportunities and economic mobility. As Alabama continues to refine and expand this model, it offers valuable insights for other states seeking to modernize their workforce systems.

Sources

1. SkillsFWD (2024). [How C-BEN and the Alabama Talent Triad Are Propelling Equitable Work Opportunities.](#)
2. Alabama Talent Triad (2024). [Bringing Manufacturing Back to America.](#)
3. C-BEN (2024). [Alabama Talent Triad Compilation Report.](#)
4. C-BEN (2023). [Employer Use of LERs Report.](#)
5. Learn & Work Ecosystem Library (2023). [Alabama Talent Triad Overview.](#)
6. Alabama Political Reporter (2023). [Alabama Talent Triad Officially Launches, Receives \\$1.4 Million Grant.](#)
7. Business Council of Alabama (2023). [The EBSCOed-Driven Alabama Talent Triad.](#)
8. Alabama State Department of Education (2024). [Memo on the Alabama Talent Triad System \(FY24-3057\).](#)
9. Talent Playbook (2023). [Alabama Talent Triad – Overview.](#)
10. C-BEN <https://www.c-ben.org/>

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude and acknowledgement to the following people, organizations, and funders who contributed to the project.

People	Organizations	Funders
❖ Emily Scheines ❖ Amber Garrison-Duncan ❖ Nick Moore ❖ Nathan Rankin ❖ Greg DiDonato ❖ Kristin Delwo	❖ AL Governor's Office of Education & Workforce Transformation ❖ AL Department of Workforce ❖ AL Office of Education & Workforce Statistics ❖ C-BEN ❖ EBSCOed	❖ AL Department of Commerce ❖ AL Department of Workforce ❖ SkillsFWD ❖ Walmart Foundation

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)	Alabama Talent Triad, based on EBSCOed's talent management platform
	Holder Credential Management Product(s)	The EBSCOed Wallet deployed in the Alabama Talent Triad
	Verifier Product(s)	Alabama Talent Triad, based on EBSCOed's talent management platform
Identifiers	Issuer Identifier Type	did:key by default, with optional support for other DID methods (e.g., did:web, did:ebssi) depending on customer requirements.
	Holder Identifier Type	did:key, email identifiers
	Verifier Identifier Type	None
Credential Model	VC Data Model Version	VCDM 1.1
	Credential Specification	Open Badges 3.0
	Skill Alignment	Skill information included in credential. Frameworks defined by issuing education providers comprise custom state ontology integrated with the platform.
	Metadata Extensions (e.g., CTDL)	Credential registry data model is compatible with CTDL
	Skills Library or Framework Used	A state-specific ontology with multiple frameworks defining the "occupational DNA" of jobs, linking skills to credentials and employment opportunities

Category	Item	Implementation
Security	VC Proof Type / Cryptosuite	Data Integrity proof with eddsa-rdfc-2022 cryptosuite
	Credential Status Method	Status support is optional. If enabled, the StatusList2021 method is used for revocation. Status endpoint may be hosted by the issuing organization or the registry.
	Credential Expiration	Set by Issuer, varies
	Credential Refresh Method	Not implemented by default
	Issuer Authority Confirmation	Issuers may be included in the Registry or another trusted service or federation.
Authentication	Holder Authentication Method	The system is designed to issue credentials asynchronously, primarily to email addresses. Optional authentication during the claim phase via CHAPI, OIDC, or email challenge-response may be available.
Delivery	Delivery Protocol to Holder	Direct download (JSON-LD) Email with link Embedded in an app wallet (e.g., via iframe or QR code integration)
	VC Export Options	JSON-LD file, PNG image file: visual representation of the badge
	Presentation Protocol Supported	Downloaded credentials may be embedded in presentations sent directly to external verifiers.
Registries & Discovery	Issuer Registry	Issuer identifiers ready for inclusion in registries on request. Verification supports custom allow lists.
	Verifier Registry	Verification engine supports DID resolution via universal resolver, optional allow lists for verifiers, and integration with trust registries or custom governance frameworks

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.