User Engagement and Messaging

Engaging stakeholders to implement LERs requires attention to both technical infrastructure and the social and organizational dynamics that influence adoption. Grantees found that technical solutions alone were not sufficient for success—widespread socialization and clearly articulated value propositions were essential to address resistance from employers and l/earners who lacked familiarity with or incentives to use new systems. Challenges often arose from limited organizational support and the perceived cost of adoption, as decision-makers were hesitant to change existing workflows without a clear return on investment. As a result, effective engagement relied on building strong relationships and trust, often facilitated by intermediaries such as career navigators, though sustaining these partnerships required significant operational effort and resources.

What We Learned

The most effective stakeholder engagement approaches involve shifting the narrative from complex technical details to clear, tailored value propositions that address specific user needs. Grantees found that broad-spread socialization was helpful but often insufficient. High-touch, relationship-based engagement strategies that utilized trusted intermediaries such as career navigators or existing industry partners helped to build confidence and demystify the technology. For employers, messaging resonated best when framed around skills intelligence and workforce optimization rather than the mechanics of interoperability, while engaging learners often required human-centric support and tangible incentives to demonstrate utility. Ultimately, simplifying the language to avoid jargon and clearly articulating the return on investment for each distinct audience proved critical in overcoming resistance and fostering adoption.

Grantee Example

Grantee projects evolved significantly over the course of the grant period as they came to understand the language and use cases that most resonate with their users. The ColoradoFWD team engaged an intentionally user-centered approach by leveraging partners, like industry associations and local workforce boards, who had established trust with their target employers and l/earners. They understood that the technology would only work so long as it was solving a pressing challenge for their target users and ended up modifying their use case based on user feedback.

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How to Apply It

Identify language that resonates with users. Jargon and overly technical language can be a deterrent for many users. LERs should be communicated to users in language that aligns with their unique value proposition. This requires taking time to understand target users' most pressing challenges that LERs may help to remedy.

Commit to a human-centered approach. Successful LER adoption depends on ensuring that individuals understand, trust, and see clear value in the tools being introduced. This requires research into organizational priorities and user needs, tailored engagement with decision-makers, implementers, and end users, and proactive strategies to build trust through transparency, feedback, and clear communication. By centering people and addressing governance, consent, and accountability early, LERs can add capacity to the workforce system and help drive better job placements and outcomes for learners and workers.

Helpful Resources

- Digital Promise: Learner Centered Toolkit for Building Inclusive LER Solutions—This resource provides an understanding of Inclusive User Experience (IUX) during the development of LERs and provides practical strategies for building accessible solutions.
- SkillsFWD Messaging Guide—This resource was created in partnership with SkillsFWD grantees and includes questions to consider when determining how best to engage different key user groups and stakeholders.
- Aspen Institute Employer Messaging Guide – This guide supports advocates of LERs with information, resources, data, ideas, and visuals that are likely to resonate with people in talent, workforce strategy, and hiring roles in all sectors.