03. Case Studies

The diverse ways LERs are being explored, implemented, and scaled across the SkillsFWD grantees.

While all projects shared a common commitment to advancing skills-based practices and interoperable digital records, each was shaped by distinct community needs, institutional contexts, and strategic priorities. As a result, the teams pursued different use cases, assembled different partnerships, and encountered unique challenges that required adaptive approaches.

Each case study is organized to provide a clear view into these efforts, including the project's background and origins, the partners and roles that formed the project team, a description of implementation and key milestones, major takeaways and lessons learned, and plans for sustaining and expanding the work. Together, these case studies illustrate that there is no single path to LER implementation. Instead, successful efforts are grounded in intentional design, strong relationships, and solutions tailored to the learners, workers, employers, and systems they are meant to serve.





ALABAMA TALENT TRIAD

Expand the use of LERs in high-demand industries to connect individuals in low-wage jobs to upskilling opportunities and middle-skilled jobs, increasing the volume of LER users and better outcomes for citizens, employers, and Alabama.

C-BEN

Serving all students & workers in Alabama

Background

On 2018, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey established a goal of adding 500,000 credentialed workers to the state's potential workforce by 2025 in order to address statewide workforce shortages. To help achieve that goal and facilitate connections between credentials and job opportunities, the state launched a collaborative statewide initiative to create the Alabama Talent Triad (the Triad). As its name suggests, the Triad is made of three distinct, yet integrated technology solutions: a credential registry, a skills-based job board with a skills-based job description generator, and an LER.

By the time SkillsFWD launched in 2023, the foundational technology of the Triad had been created in partnership with EBSCOed and thousands of Alabamians were enrolled. Alabama's SkillsFWD proposal aimed to build upon their work-to-date to scale career pathways in in-demand career pathways and address barriers to LER adoption through strategic stakeholder engagement in order to accelerate progress toward the state's goal of increasing credentialing and facilitating connections between workers and employers. The state contracted the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) to serve as a project manager.

Team

C-BEN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION NETWORK

Team Lead

Facilitated project and stakeholder engagement throughout the grant period.

Project Lead

Set project vision and ensure ongoing success of the Triad.

EBSCOed

Technology Partner

Built tech infrastructure for the Triad, led employer onboarding and user research efforts

ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

Credentialing

Advanced credential transparency through academic credentials and testing interoperability.

ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Credentialing

Led credential mapping and integration of registry in community colleges.

Credentialing

Engaged higher education institutions and led learner engagement.

Alabama Chambers
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA

Employee Partner

Led employer engagement through local workforce development boards.

Implemenation

Throughout the SkillsFWD grant period, the Triad team focused on three core areas: pathway development and enablement, LER user research, and shared communications and engagement frameworks. Together, these workstreams advanced the state's vision of a connected education-to-employment system grounded in skills data and user-centered design.

The career pathway development workstream focused on aligning education and employment data around shared skill definitions in two priority industries: manufacturing and healthcare. This work supported and built upon the work of the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways which is tasked with creating the credential registry component of the Triad and to ensure that credentials are aligned with in-demand jobs. By June 2024, a cross-sector work group led by C-BEN and the ACCCP had reviewed and added 266 industry-aligned credentials to the registry. Meanwhile, EBSCOed worked with credentialing agencies to expand the registry's data fields to improve transparency and interoperability by including machine-readable skills and linked credential information.

To ensure smooth transferability and recognition of skills in educational programs offered, the Alabama Community College System and Athens State University collaborated with C-BEN to review and align learning pathways across institutions. Overall, this work created more structured ways for Alabamians to gain and communicate skills relevant to high-demand career pathways.

Research efforts on the adoption of LERs was led by EBSCOed and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), which examined how learners and employers were engaging with The Triad to inform system improvements. By mid-2024, more than 3,200 high school students, 440 community college students, and 16,000 adult education learners had participated in testing. Overall, learners found the tools intuitive and appreciated being able to see how coursework and experiences translated into verified skills. They found the resume builder feature particularly helpful for connecting learning to job requirements. However, some learners struggled to understand how to upload credentials. Participating employers cited wanting clearer guidance on how to use LER data in hiring and advancement and emphasized the importance of consistent data validation and integration with human resource systems. In response, C-BEN and EBSCOed worked to enhance relevant functionalities of the Triad and created resources to support learners and employers, including specialized training for those supporting students and the employer leaders participating in the ACCCP.



The final workstream focused on communication and engagement. To drive awareness of the value of the Triad within higher education institutions, ACHE developed a unified narrative to help partners across the state articulate the Triad's purpose and impact. Outreach materials were distributed widely to educators and a "train-the-trainer" model equipped career coaches, case managers, and advisors to support learners in creating and using their LERs. To promote equitable adoption by learners, ACHE partnered with Auburn Online to develop noncredit digital literacy microcourses that help learners understand how to navigate and share their records safely and confidently.



In addition, The Alabama Department of Commerce focused on reaching employers across the state through the Trailblazer Initiative. Through this work, they leveraged seven regional workforce councils to recruit employers and support their participation in a pilot program to adopt skills-based hiring practices. This led to more than 95 employers onboarded and over 1,000 skills-based job postings. To make progress of the Triad visible to all stakeholders, ACHE and EBSCOed created an interactive public dashboard that tracks adoption across regions, sectors, and user types, highlighting growth in learner participation, employer onboarding, and credential registry use. The dashboard now serves as a key tool for monitoring impact and informing statewide workforce development strategies and investment.

Insights for the Field

State-level support facilitates stakeholder engagement and sustainable resourcing.
The Triad benefited from being embedded within legislatively established structures and supported by state leadership, which created clear accountability and alignment across employers, educators, and workforce agencies. This centralized backing made it easier to engage stakeholders, coordinate efforts, and secure resources that can sustain LER adoption beyond the grant period.

Visualizing progress helps to communicate value across the ecosystem.
The development of an interactive dashboard allowed partners to see adoption metrics by region, sector, and user type, making the impact of the Triad tangible. By presenting clear evidence of learner participation, employer engagement, and credential registry activity, the dashboard helped build confidence among stakeholders and encouraged continued investment and participation.

Looking Ahead

Alabama has positioned the Triad for long-term sustainability and ecosystem impact through legislative codification and institutionalized statewide support. The infrastructure and pathways created during the grant are designed to be scalable, with continuous updates to competency sets and credential reviews. Statewide integration into existing education and workforce systems, including the newly established Department of the Workforce, ensures that the LERs continue to serve learners and employers effectively. The Triad team plans to continue deepening employer engagement, scale credential issuance, and maintain the alignment of pathways with labor market demand. By embedding LER adoption into policy, infrastructure, and stakeholder workflows, Alabama seeks to maintain a resilient, skills-centered talent marketplace that benefits learners, employers, and institutions alike.