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.





Central Ohio Talent Network

Enhance talent and employer matching in Central Ohio using LERs, focusing on high school students and recent alumni.

Aspyr

Serving Columbus City Schools graduating seniors

Background

In 2018, the State of Ohio created the OhioMeansJobReadiness Seal. This is a designation that high school seniors can earn by asking three or more mentors to validate that they demonstrate a set of professional skills that is valued by Ohio employers. Columbus City Schools partnered with their learning management system, SchooLinks, to digitize these achievements. This unique credential is aligned with the district's broader focus on postsecondary preparation —every student is required to complete 120 hours of internship, career and college exploration experiences, and community service in order to graduate. With this robust career readiness focus in place, there was a clear opportunity to create a seamless, scalable bridge between high school students and local employers, especially for learners not pursuing four-year college pathways.

Through SkillsFWD, Central Ohio's local workforce board, Aspyr, in partnership with Columbus City Schools and SchooLinks, set out to create a "Common App for Jobs," in alignment with LER interoperability standards. The goal was to enable students to search for and apply to multiple career and training opportunities with a single application. For Aspyr, this was an opportunity not only to support local students in their transition out of high school, but also to address workforce shortages in their local manufacturing sector by targeting employers in partnership with The Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership. Through SkillsFWD, this team aimed to leverage existing technology and partnerships to create robust infrastructure to move students and early-career jobseekers smoothly from preparation to employment in high-demand roles using standardized, verifiable digital credentials.

Team

ASPYR

Team Lead

Set vision, convened and managed partnerships, ensured project progress. Facilitated partnerships with employers.

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

Credentialing Issuer

Leveraged existing LMS to connect students with LER technology and provided guidance and support in using it to navigate career planning.

schoolinks

Technology Partner

Created digital credential issuing technology and marketplace within the existing SchooLinks Learning Management System.

COMP
Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership

Employer Partner

Helped to facilitate partnerships with local manufacturing employers.

Implemenation

The Aspyr team began by formalizing a coalition that had already been collaborating across K-12, workforce, employer, and technology sectors. They established and led regular meetings with Columbus City Schools (CCS), SchooLinks, and the Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership (COMP) to align around common goals and create accountability structures throughout the grant period. SkillsFWD added capacity to this partnership to enable them to complete the technical development, employer engagement, and learner engagement necessary to build a robust end-to-end demonstration. SchooLinks led the technical development workstream and began by preparing their technical ecosystem for LER-aligned credential and data exchange. SchooLinks also expanded its underlying infrastructure to support Open Badges 3.0, Comprehensive Learner Records, and the digital credential wallet architecture. This work established the scaffolding needed to represent learner achievements in portable, standards-based formats. Overall, this created a system within students' SchooLinks accounts through which they could receive, manage, and share digital credentials in an interoperable format.

Parallel to the technical build, the team deepened employer participation through COMP's business members and Aspyr's employer networks. COMP facilitated conversations with local manufacturers to validate hiring needs, understand how credentials were perceived, and establish desired data flows from learners into applicant tracking systems. These interactions allowed the team to structure job requirements into competency-aligned formats to display to students. For the pilot, four regional employers created accounts on the SchooLinks platform and were trained on how to search for skilled talent.

Embedding LER functionality within the SchooLinks platform meant that every CCS student already had an account and could immediately receive earned credentials and see academic achievements reflected in their profile. To support adoption and maximize impact, Aspyr, SchooLinks, and CCS partnered to train district staff to help students build resumes, apply to jobs and training opportunities, and engage with employers. These interactions enabled counselors to contextualize digital tools and spark student interest in manufacturing careers. While some counselors initially struggled to support students as they learned the new functionality themselves, continued training and growing familiarity have strengthened the integration of LERs into everyday advising, allowing technology and human support to work together more effectively.

As pilots matured, the team focused on documenting processes and designing components that could scale beyond Central Ohio. Because SchooLinks serves millions of students nationwide and integrates with key SIS systems, every enhancement, including credential wallets and LER-compliant data exchange, was developed with national release in mind. This milestone transformed the project from a regional initiative into a potential national exemplar, with the Ohio implementation serving as the test case for a replicable talent network model built to LER standards. By the end of the grant period, over 149,000 students had been invited to claim LERs in the Columbus region, and more than 5 million had been invited to claim LERs nationwide in other regions that leverage SchooLinks.







Insights for the Field

Building upon existing platforms familiar to learners streamlines adoption.
When LER technology is built within existing technology platforms that learners are already using, all users within that system can benefit immediately. Columbus City Schools was able to reach more students within the grant period because those students were already using SchooLinks for learning management and post-secondary planning. Instead of needing to create a new profile for a new tool, these students had functionality added to a tool they were already familiar with.

LERs do not replace the role of trusted professionals, but enhances their impact.
Career counselors are critical in helping many new users understand the value of LERs, and at the same time, LERs can help expand capacity for career counselors. While leveraging a new technology can feel daunting, a trusted professional can help guide students in how to use it to achieve their goals. The Columbus City Schools' career counselors play a critical role in the long-term success of this implementation and the new LER technology within SchooLinks should enable them to serve more students, more effectively, and in partnership with more employers.

Looking Ahead

By the end of 2025, this Central Ohio team plans to have over 2,000 students having accepted their LERs in the SchooLinks platform and increase hiring of graduating seniors by expanding their active employer network. Looking forward, the team plans to support early career planning by issuing LERs to younger students, before their senior year, and implementing a train-the-trainer model to empower district staff to engage local employers in the network. Aspyr also plans to begin issuing LERs through some of the other career and training programs they offer to young adults to facilitate skills-based connections with local employers. SchooLinks will continue to leverage the technology they created through this initiative to enhance career planning functionality for their clients a cross the country.