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.





Indiana Achievement Wallet

Deploy wallets across three colleges, and engage with employers prepared for skills-first hiring through Smart Resume and the iQ4 Skills Talent Pipeline (STP).

Western Governor's University

Serving learners at partner post-secondary educational institutions

Background

Indiana has long been a leader in skills-based practices, beginning with its participation as a Skillful State in 2018. In 2023, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education advanced this work through a statewide initiative with WGU, Ivy Tech, and Purdue Global to test program-level LER implementations. Using platforms like Parchment Award, Canvas Credentials, iQ4's Wallet, and the Credential Engine Registry, partners conducted broad research, outreach, and technical testing. This work confirmed both feasibility and strong employer and learner demand for LERs. Building on this momentum, WGU emerged as the natural lead for the SkillsFWD project, partnering with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce to turn this foundational work into an implementation strategy designed for scale and impact.

By the time SkillsFWD began, WGU had piloted the Indiana Achievement Wallet (IAW), with over 1,000 WGU Indiana students and had observed strong student support. They formed a partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Workforce Excellence, which provides training on skills-based practices for employers across the state. Together, WGU and the Indiana Chamber saw LERs as a critical mechanism to help employers proactively identify talent, as well as to help learners understand how their skills align with high-demand roles.

Team

WGU

Project Lead & Credentialing Issuer

Established project vision, engaged partners, facilitated project management.

INSTITUTE FOR WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

Project Lead & Employer Partner

Led employer engagement, design efforts, and supported project management.

INDIANA COMMISSION for HIGHER EDUCATION

Governance

Engaged issuers across the state in skills-based recognition and credentialing practices.

Credential Engine™

Technology Partner

Provided technology and data infrastructure to support the development of the statewide credential registry.

SmartResume

Technology Partner

Facilitated connections to healthcare employers to support sector-specific learning.

iQ4

Technology Partner

Provided insight on healthcare credentialing processes within the state.

IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Credentialing Partner

Regional workforce partner supporting user engagement.

PURDUE GLOBAL™

Credentialing Partner

Regional workforce partner supporting user engagement.

Implemenation

Western Governor's University
Serving learners at partner post-secondary educational institutions

With technology and strong credentialing partnerships already in place, the WGU team, in partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, leveraged the SkillsFWD grant period to enhance the user experience, reach more students, and create robust connections with employers.

While a pilot of the IAW had already been launched, this team continued to pursue ways to enhance learners' ability to share their skills with employers and strengthen employers' capacity to connect directly with talent. To add value for employers, iQ4 developed and implemented the Skills Talent Pipeline (STP) platform which allows employers to actively search for workers with specific skills. During the grant period, they demonstrated an early version of the STP with two employers and found that skills-first matching helped employers identify talent beyond traditional proxies such as work history. To add value for learners, the team partnered with SmartResume so students could share and manage their verified skills and credentials not only in their iQ4 Wallet and with participating STP employers, but also in a verified digital résumé format recognizable to a wider range of hiring managers.

The enhancements to user experience, coupled with intentional outreach and partnership development, helped drive adoption among both learners and employers. To reach students, the team sent invitations to tens of thousands of learners across WGU, Purdue Global, and Ivy Tech. They found that adoption rates varied significantly across institutions, likely due to differences in how each institution socialized the tool to students. For example, WGU—where faculty were strongly bought in and actively promoted the IAW—saw the highest rates of uptake. Another contributing factor was that each institution used different credentialing platforms (e.g., Canvas, Parchment). Although integrations were built to allow credential transfer into the IAW, the user experience varied depending on the issuing system.

To engage employers, the team leveraged relationships cultivated through the Indiana Chamber's Institute for Workforce Excellence which had been training employers in skills-based hiring. By focusing on those already invested in these practices, the team demonstrated how LERs can operationalize and strengthen skills-based talent strategies. Employers reported immediate benefits and even formed peer groups to share best practices. Four target employers participated in a Skills-Based Hiring Accelerator, creating skills-based job descriptions, learning to conduct skills-based searches, and applying these practices in real hiring. One notable example involved a probation officer chief who used a skills-based posting from the training to hire a Juvenile Probation Officer Supervisor who perfectly fit the required skills, despite lacking the typical prior experience.

Through these efforts, the team made significant progress in enhancing the user experience for both learners and employers and achieved meaningful scale within a short period. They are well positioned to continue expanding reach across Indiana and the broader WGU student and alumni network.



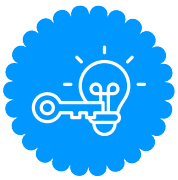




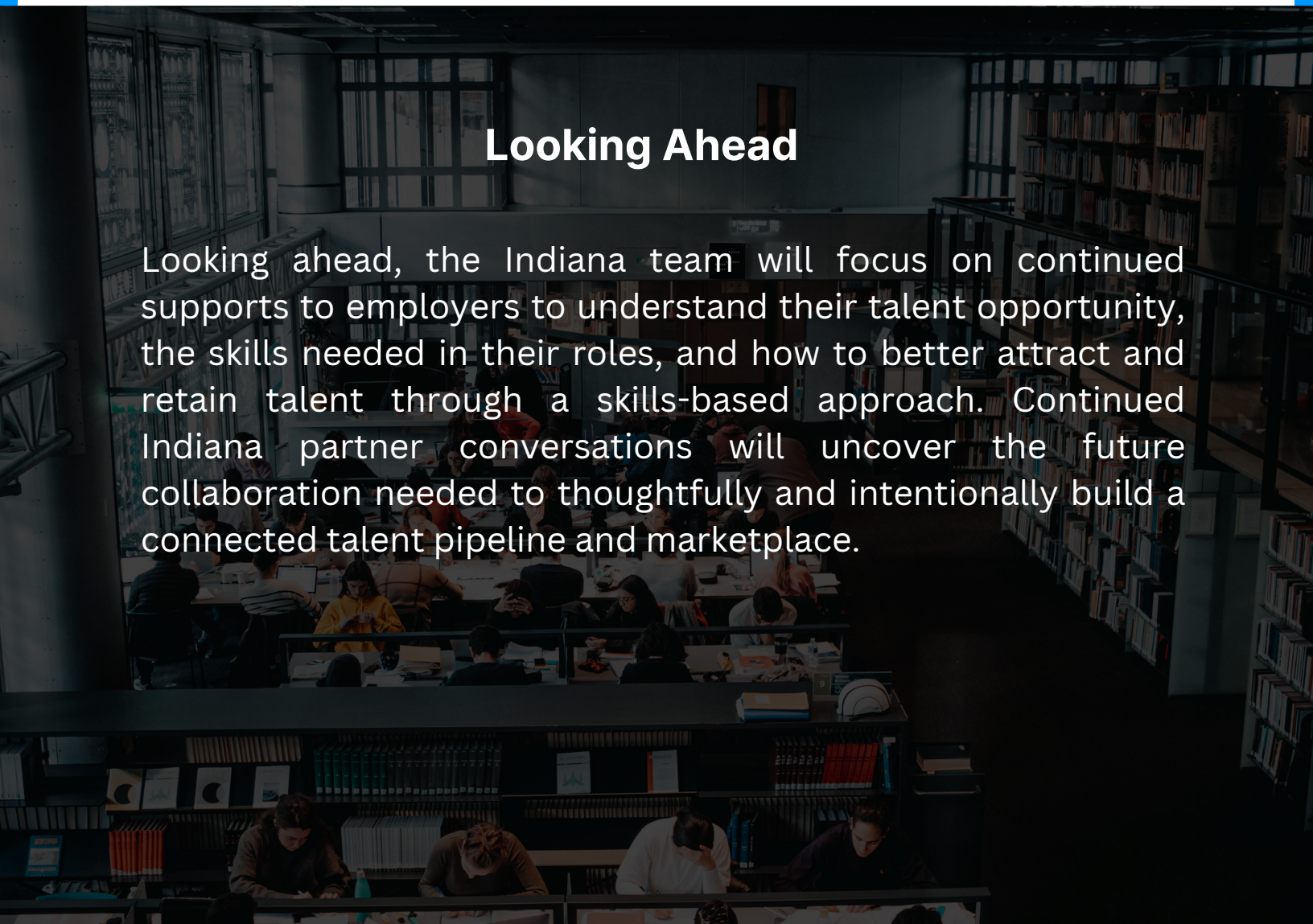
Insights for the Field



Leading with skills-based practices drives employer engagement.
The Indiana Chamber of Commerce was able to facilitate connections with employers who already saw the value in skills-based hiring. This made it easier to communicate the role that LERs can play because they could be leveraged to make progress toward goals that were already established. In this way, LERs were not an entirely new concept, but a tool to achieve something that employers in which employers already saw value.



Institutional buy-in is key for post-secondary adoption.
Though all of this project's partner institutions were able to invite large numbers of students to accept digital credentials in their IAW, WGU experienced the strongest adoption by their students because leaders in the institution truly understood the value and supported broad socialization of the tool. When leadership is bought in, they can help perpetuate a clear message that allows learners to see the value of LERs for communicating their learning.



Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the Indiana team will focus on continued supports to employers to understand their talent opportunity, the skills needed in their roles, and how to better attract and retain talent through a skills-based approach. Continued Indiana partner conversations will uncover the future collaboration needed to thoughtfully and intentionally build a connected talent pipeline and marketplace.