

A woman and a man in a modern office setting looking at documents on a table. The woman is on the left, wearing a patterned top, and the man is on the right, wearing a patterned shirt. They are both looking down at a document on a table. The background shows a bright, open-plan office with glass walls and modern furniture.

Interoperable Learning & Employment Records

Where knowledge and skills
are transparent, accessible,
and easily shared



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Executive Summary

Over the last decade, calls for increased transparency about what someone knows and can do has led education reform efforts to shift the way skills are validated and documented for individuals and how individuals may use these records in the labor market over a lifetime. At the same time, employers are using skills-based hiring as a method to increase efficiency in hiring and retaining talent.

Current practices limit individual learners' access to information that could help them accomplish their goals of economic mobility – that is, information on the competencies and skills that they have gained through education, training, and experience. At the center of these efforts are traditional education transcripts that document grades and courses that learners have taken. Further, these records are controlled by institutions that require learners to seek permission to share, often at a cost.

States, institutions, employers, and even federal agencies have set sights on a new vision, where individuals have access to and use of their learning and employment data through the seamless sharing and use of **Learning and Employment Records (LERs)**.^{*} Leveraging new technologies, LERs are reshaping not only what is recorded about a learner's knowledge, skills, and capabilities, but also how learners can access and use their data to pursue employment and further education without barriers.



***Learning and Employment Records (LERs):** Learning and employment data, earned through education, workforce, service, and other experiences that taught a learner skills, knowledge, or competencies, that is owned and shared by the individual learner.

Executive Summary

This transformation holds great potential to opening doors for learners, but there is one critical conversation left to bring this new vision to life. To achieve this new system, data must be able to be seamlessly owned and shared by individuals. This vision requires **interoperability*** of the data systems that produce LERs that will allow learners to accumulate multiple records over time to reflect the range of credentials and competencies earned. Further, learners will seek to use their data to interact with employment and education systems, including career navigation and job searches, that will allow them to continue to build skills and a career.

To achieve interoperability, action is required by the public and private sector. To guide action, **a common set of principles for education and employment data has been created** for use by key decision makers who provide education and training to millions of Americans each year, including policy makers, state and federal agencies, philanthropy, employers, colleges and universities, K-12 district leaders, workforce agencies, and military branches.



***Interoperability:** The ability of systems to work together, exchange, and make use of information from other systems. In education, interoperability is **the ability of a system to exchange education and workforce information** with and use information from other systems without special effort on the part of the user. This means all individuals, including learners and employers, **have appropriate access to education and workforce information**, allowing them to make informed decisions in the workplace.

Vision: Talent Marketplace

Economic mobility should be based on what you know and can do, rather than traditional proxies for talent such as pedigree, degrees, and networks. To accomplish this vision, competencies and skills must be enabled as the currency of the talent marketplace.

- LERs must allow individuals to own and use their competencies, skills, and credentials to leverage in the marketplace.
- Competencies, skills, and credentials in the marketplace must be transparent in order to be shared, compared, and understood.
- Job postings must include competencies, skills, and credentials in order to connect people with jobs (or employers to talent).
- Competencies, skills, and credentials must be interoperable with each other.

Who will benefit from interoperability of Learning and Employment Records?

- **Learners and Workers** will have more control over information about their education and experience, making it easier for them to find new jobs or advance at their current organizations. Verifiable credentials allow the value of the credential to persist even if the institution doesn't.
- **Employers** will be able to find the best candidates for hiring, easily verifying candidate competencies and credentials, for both new and incumbent hires.
- **Education, Training, and Credentialing Providers** will be able to document learning and align their curriculum, credentials, assessments, and career services with a rapidly changing job market.
- **Government** will be able to more effectively collect data and implement effective policies that allocate resources to support education and workforce development.



Interoperability Principles

1. Open Standards

Data included in LERs are formatted using a standard structure, allowing for easy exchange between individuals, education, and employment.

2. Privacy & Security

Systems protect the privacy and security of individuals' data, which, in turn, builds and maintains trust in LERs.

3. Unlock Learning Anywhere

Learning is lifelong, and quality learning can occur outside of the classroom. Interoperable LERs honor the value of all learning and offer processes for validating a wide range of learning, skills, and competencies.

4. Universal Access

Interoperable LERs are user-centered and ensure every potential user has access to and control of a digital wallet to store, manage, and curate LERs.

5. Alignment

All stakeholders, including employers, states, and local, regional, and federal agencies, are aligned, intentionally collaborating to support and ensure fidelity to interoperability principles.

6. Public and Private Partnerships Creating Public Good

A healthy marketplace is cultivated and regulated to both encourage innovation and ensure that the benefits of interoperable LERs are shared by all stakeholders.

7. Global Mobility

Interoperable LERs support learners' mobility by functioning in local, regional, state, national, and global talent marketplaces.

Considerations

There are many aspects that are not addressed in these principles but are important and critical to accomplishing the goals for individuals, including technology adoption among institutions and individuals, data quality, focus on digital skills, usability, and organization workflows.

Further, the principles do not address how adopting organizations may seek to distinguish themselves in the marketplace. These topics are being addressed by organizations that were consulted in the development of the principles.

Take Action



Provide Feedback

Share your insights on how interoperability principles can be used or improved.



Adopt the Principles

Share, adopt, and elevate interoperability principles across your system.



Integrate Principles into Processes

Commit to using these interoperability principles to inform practices, decision making, and innovation across your system



C-BEN grew out of the idea that education should focus on true competency—what an individual knows and can do—rather than on proxies for knowledge and skills. We believed that by building a network committed to growing competency-based education, we could make postsecondary education more flexible, responsive, and valuable for learners and employers.

Learning and employment records are a key to unlocking the potential for skills-based hiring and competency-based learning to create this future. We support institutions, states, and national organizations in implementing this new approach to validating and sharing skills.

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