

ADVANCING A SKILLS-DRIVEN WORKFORCE

Learning and Employment Records

February 2024

About the National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America's counties, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- Advocate county priorities in federal policymaking
- Promote exemplary county policies and practices
- Nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks
- Optimize county and taxpayer resources and cost savings, and
- Enrich the public understanding of county government.

NACo's Mission

Strengthen America's Counties.

NACo's Vision

Healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America.

Acknowledgments

This primer draws upon information and expertise from the National Governors Association's Skills-Driven States Community of Practice, as well as examples in practice from the Washington Student Achievement Council and Western Governors University. The primer was written and compiled by Annie Qing with support and guidance from Rashida Brown.

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COUNTY PRIMER ON LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT RECORDS (LERs)

Every county is served by one of the 550 local workforce development boards (WDBs), and nearly 30 percent of WDBs operate directly within a county department or a county agency. Amidst labor market challenges and rapid digital transformation, stakeholders in workforce development – including county governments – are seeking innovative approaches to facilitate more equitable and efficient hiring. One such strategy is **skills-based hiring**. Skills-based hiring works towards equity in employment by involving communities disproportionately excluded from the workforce and prioritizing abilities over on-paper credentials and years of experience.

Successful application of a local skills-based hiring approach could include public-private partnerships, increased accessibility to education and employment information and interoperability across data systems

to avoid duplication of data collection. Counties can leverage these strategies to strengthen and create career pathways for potential workers – especially for those experiencing barriers to employment – by using learning and employment records (LERs).



AMERICA'S COUNTIES
EMPLOY

3.6M

public servants,
representing one out
of every 50 American
workers.



NEARLY

30%

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Learning and Employment Records (LERs)

Learning and Employment Records (LERs) are a new concept nationally and tool for skills-based hiring. They store verifiable digital records that can span an individual's education, training, employment, licensing and identity in a digital wallet that can be transmitted between individuals, prospective employers and education or training providers.

LERs document learning in multiple contexts – from formal classroom education at higher education institutions to informal on-the-job training in a workplace. They can also record credentials earned through online programs or military training, as well as additional useful information like earnings.

LERs have the potential to improve both hiring efficiency and equity:

- LERs can improve **hiring efficiency** by assembling workforce development stakeholders through one platform. According to the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board Digital Infrastructure Working Group, *“LERs can seamlessly record, verify, transmit, and interpret information about learning achievements between learning institutions, businesses, and individuals.”*
- LERs may improve **hiring equity** primarily through adherence to the principles of skills-based hiring. By elevating the employability of workers without traditional education but equivalent work experience, LER systems can increase access to family-sustaining jobs for individuals who have experienced barriers to higher education. This skills-based system also accounts for increasingly common non-traditional forms of work experience, including participation in the gig economy. As a digital system, LERs can also easily conceal demographic identifiers during the hiring process, dismantling discriminatory practices that result from unconscious bias.

LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT RECORDS (LERs) EXAMPLE

Imagine, for instance, a learner named **Pete**, whose education and employment experience is stored in the LER system and who is applying for a job using his LER digital wallet.

RECORD



Pete's work experience from Company A and short-term credentials are automatically uploaded to the LER system and visible on his digital wallet.

VERIFY



Pete's work experience and short-term credentials are independently and automatically verified with Company A (his former employer) and career technical institution, respectively.

TRANSMIT



During the job application process, Pete's verified LER is sent to Company B (the employer who posted the job) over a shared system.

INTERPRET



The LER system deconstructs Pete's work experience and credentials into skills that can be compared with the required qualifications posted by Company B.

Key Principles

The following key principles are at the heart of the LER system and enable it to achieve hiring efficiency and equity:

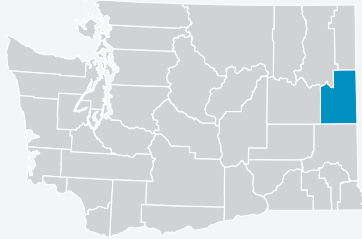
- **STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE:** The LER system captures data from millions of education, training and employment programs in the United States. For this data to be useful to all stakeholders, it must be in a standardized format. The process of creating a standardized classification system is called **credential deconstruction**.
- **INTEROPERABILITY:** LERs involve a variety of systems, including higher education, workforce development, employers and jobseekers as end users, as well as a growing number of tech vendors that can operate the LER infrastructure itself. LER systems can be designed to securely translate and exchange data or information among all of these actors using standardized credentials and **universally interpretable data**. Using open data standards and grounding the data in Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) assures that LER system data is accessible and interpretable for a multitude of stakeholders.
- **VERIFIABILITY:** Education and employment processes often involve verification of degrees, credentials and work experience. When an LER participant's information is created or transferred, it must be **verifiable** for employers and educators.
- **DATA PRIVACY:** As a nascent concept in education technology, LER systems risk compromising data privacy without intentional protection. LER participants must have **full authorization to decide how their data is shared** because it consists of their personal information. To support LER systems and design elements that promote interoperability, counties can use data-sharing agreements and adopt policies that clarify who owns and controls the data. LER systems can respect individuals' right to control how their data is shared by exercising full transparency around data-sharing mechanisms and adhering to existing data privacy and protection laws.

The screenshot displays the 'Achievement Wallet' interface. On the left, a sidebar for the 'Data Scientist' role includes a 'Delete this role' button and fields for 'JOB FAMILY' (IT R&D Professionals), 'ROLE' (Data Scientist), and 'LOCATION' (All States). The main area features a central person icon connected to a network of career paths: Wound Care Nurse, Software Engineer, Data Manager, University Lecturer in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning Engineer, Bioinformatics Scientist, and Computer Research Engineer. A legend at the top right indicates 'Matched' (black square) and 'Missing' (blue square) skills.

Western Governors University's Achievement Wallet allows students to see their education and work experience broken down into individual skills and visualize how those stack up against possible careers. In response to their first beta, 78% of learners agreed that seeing the gaps between existing and missing skills clarified how they qualify for a job.

CASE STUDY

SPOKANE COUNTY, WASH.



Spokane County, Wash. is one of many counties in the U.S. that struggles with a health care workforce shortage. In 2022, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) partnered with Greater Spokane, Inc. – the county’s chamber of commerce, Providence Health – the region’s largest health care provider, Eastern Washington University (EWU) and other stakeholders to create an LER system. In the first year, incoming university students that were participating in a Summer Bridge program were offered the option to opt into the LER system to receive EWU credentials for their Summer Bridge experiences, as well as a Providence Health job shadowing opportunity. Standardized training merits – from both campus exploration modules at EWU and work experience at Providence – were recorded in the LER system and made visible in students’ and employers’ digital wallets.

The expansion of Spokane County’s LER-based employment and training program in its second year targets veteran, first-generation college student and immigrant populations. Individuals enrolled in the program take administrative, English as a second language (ESL) and digital literacy trainings to build their credentials and access a pipeline directly to roles at Providence Health.



You're looking good

No new notifications

My QR Code



Scan your digital credentials

My Merits



Summer Bridge - Geology Fieldwork

Summer Bridge - Financial Literacy

Summer Bridge - Rocket Design

Pre-Writing Your Resumé

Network!

The Eastern Washington University and Providence Health LER system records “merits” representing the skills and credentials earned through the Summer Bridge program.

“LER systems are an effective workforce development strategy in rural counties. Counties can engage cross-sector and intergovernmental partners in gathering resources to create an LER system that addresses workforce shortages and hiring inequity.”

— Inez Olive, WSAC Associate Director of Workforce Programs

What Counties Can Do to Support LERs

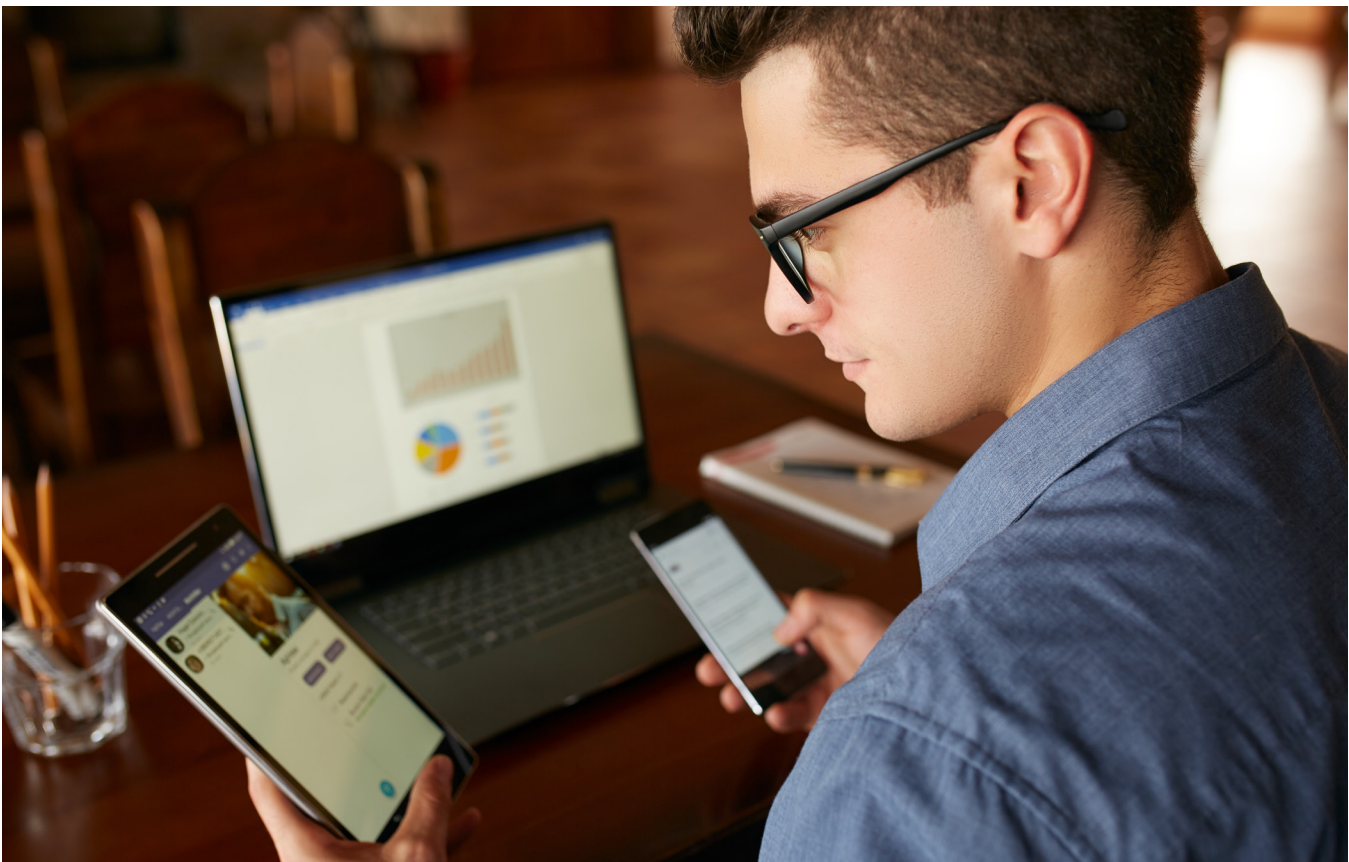
Given their authority and vested interest in fostering a robust workforce, counties are well-positioned to promote the development of LER systems.

- As natural conveners, counties are in a position to **assemble the breadth of stakeholders** – private industry, small businesses, higher education, nonprofits, workforce development boards and support services – to co-design an LER system that responds to local needs.
- County governments can **assure interoperability** by uniting all businesses, educational institutions and candidates in the county under one LER system.
- County elected officials have the authority to **invest in innovative solutions** in workforce development, which can include LER platforms.

Learn More




[The National Association of Counties](#) and [National Governors Association](#) are partnering in a national effort that seeks alignment among state and local systems for life-long learning. This initiative involves helping government leaders build their knowledge and understand how to leverage credential data, learning and employment records and skills-based training and hiring practices in cross-cutting systems advancing education and workforce development.

Counties in states participating in the [National Governors Association's \(NGA\) Skills-Driven States Community of Practice](#) can coordinate with their state government or governor's office to get more involved in skills-based hiring or pilot an LER program. More detailed information on skills-based hiring and LERs can be found on NGA's website at <https://www.nga.org/projects/skills-driven-state-community-of-practice/>.





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