American Workforce Policy Advisory Board
Data Transparency Working Group

Interoperable Digital Learning Record Concept

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Why do we need an interoperable digital learning record?
American workers demonstrate their wealth of knowledge, skills, and abilities every day, but this information is collected and maintained in a manual way leading to long time to hire, high cost per hire, stifled innovation, and little proactive response on future skills demands. In the manufacturing industry, the average time to hire is 30.7 days. In engineering departments, it is 60 days. In 2017, it took federal agencies an average of 106 days to hire new employees. The cost for employers to hire increased 7.1 year-over-year. Manual hiring processes are increasing the time to hire and the cost per hire, and the time it takes American job seekers to do what they do best: work.

Aside from higher education digital records, there is no widely adopted and accessible system that allows users to document their achievements and abilities across education institutions, non-traditional learning avenues, professional development, and other continued learning. Documentation of a worker's achievements like a resume or an academic degree may not convey the entire story of a worker's talent and value to an employer. This manual and gap-filled documentation leaves much to be desired to match American workers with American jobs.

The digital economy is changing jobs drastically, and it is difficult with traditional methods like resumes or degrees to identify skills that can easily transfer from one kind of job to another. A learning record is needed to separate skills from specific job roles to allow American workers to understand how they can compete for jobs of the future.

How can we achieve this?
Tremendous value can be delivered through a system where Americans own a verified and standardized record of their accomplishments in the classroom, through offline or online training and education, as well as talents demonstrated on-the-job and engagement with professional associations. Such a record can be used by American workers in a diverse range of industries and roles in order to track their professional growth. Further, these records potentially can be leveraged as a strategic data asset to identify the stock of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience in the American workforce. These records can also reduce the burden borne by employers when verifying the achievements of a job candidate. For such a record to have utility, it must be interoperable, so a worker can take their record and plug it into any part of a broad spectrum of human capital management (HCM) applications used by employers.

The Data Transparency Working Group can help coordinate across and leverage existing initiatives aimed at developing a practicable interoperable learning record system. To begin doing so, this group can address core strategic questions. These questions include:

- Who will develop a standard representation of skills information for end users like American workers? How can the Data Transparency Working Group align producers and users of HCM applications to align with these standards?
- How can we maximize the legitimacy of interoperable learning records? How can we ensure that employers will see these records as verified and trustworthy? Who will manage and maintain this verification process?
- How can employees be encouraged to take ownership of their learning record and actively maintain it? How will we make American workers aware of learning records and how to use them?
- How can interoperable learning records balance skills gained through experience and skills gained through training?
- Do any mechanisms need to be put in place from either a technical or regulatory perspective to ensure data privacy and protection?

We believe that an interoperable learning record is within reach today. Our belief is that the Data Transparency Working Group must answer these core strategic questions to take what is within reach and push interoperable learning records into an environment where they can become a reality.

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