

Scaling Open Durable Skills Microcredentials: A Collaborative Model for Workforce Readiness

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In an evolving global labor market, "durable skills" such as communication, problem-solving, adaptability, professionalism, and customer service and sales skills are increasingly essential for success across virtually all industries. These transferable skills are particularly critical in client-facing roles in the finance and insurance sectors, where employers cite a growing gap in qualified candidates needed to meet demand over the next 5-10 years. Harnessing principles and practices of open education and open recognition, this session presented a collaborative initiative to develop and scale open durable skills microcredentials, designed to equitably address these workforce gaps and improve career readiness.

Solving complex labor market challenges requires engagement from multiple stakeholders. This project represents a unique cross-sector partnership between the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), a large national bank, OpenStax, and Pressbooks, each contributing distinct expertise:

- MCCCD, a national leader in workforce development, provides instructional design, curriculum alignment with industry needs, and integration into programs like the Securities Industry Essentials (SIE) microcredential pathway. It also coordinates stakeholder engagement and ensures that the microcredentials support economic mobility, and equitable learner access.
- The large national bank provides employer insight on the durable skills needed for success in financial service roles, informing competency-based assessments and scenario-based training aligned with hiring needs and performance expectations.
- OpenStax, a nonprofit based at Rice University, contributes high-quality, openly licensed content, and develops modular, asynchronous learning experiences that are accessible, inclusive, and pedagogically sound.
- Pressbooks provides the infrastructure to publish, tag, and distribute microcredential content in accessible, standards-aligned formats, supporting LMS integration and broad reuse of learning content.

This project organized durable skills into 11 microcredential modules, each focused on areas such as communication, cultural awareness, initiative, technological literacy, and service and sales. These competency-based, self-paced microcredentials include

assessments based on real financial service scenarios. Responding to industry priorities, the project is starting with the service and sales skills microcredential pathway.

The development process employs a collaborative model to ensure open durable skills microcredentials meet the needs of industry and educational stakeholders. Each module integrates case studies and interactive learning components initially tailored to finance and insurance settings, but intended for modular use and adaptation to other contexts.

The partners are implementing a national dissemination strategy that includes faculty training, workforce board outreach, partnerships with additional colleges and universities, and alignment with frameworks such as the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and Education Design Lab (EDL). The initiative also addresses technology needs for microcredential validation, discoverability, and localization of modularized microcredential pathways. The open licensing model supports adaptation by other organizations inside and outside the US, allowing them to tailor modules to their own regional and sectoral needs, as well as delivery preferences, while maintaining core skill integrity. Given that the materials are openly licensed, the project will offer opportunities for students to complete the durable skills model and assert the recognition process, enabling an open recognition component. In addition to discussing the project structure and implementation approach, the session will surface critical challenges inherent in scaling open durable skills microcredentials at a national level. Presenters showcased early outcomes, shared key design artifacts, and engaged attendees in dialogue around sustaining cross-sector collaboration in open credentialing.

Keywords: microcredentials, durable skills, Open Educational Resources (OER), collaboration, Open Recognition