

Cultivating Equitable Pathways:

Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies In Utilizing Non-Degree Credentials

Facilitators



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Agenda

Introductions

Conversation Goals/ Key Takeaways

Shifting Towards Equity: Challenges and Opportunities

Micro-credentials: Definitions and Framework

Micro-credentials: In Practice

Implications & Recommendations

Questions

Let's Get To Know Each Other!

In the chat please introduce yourself by mentioning the following:

Organization/ Role

Location



About Digital Promise

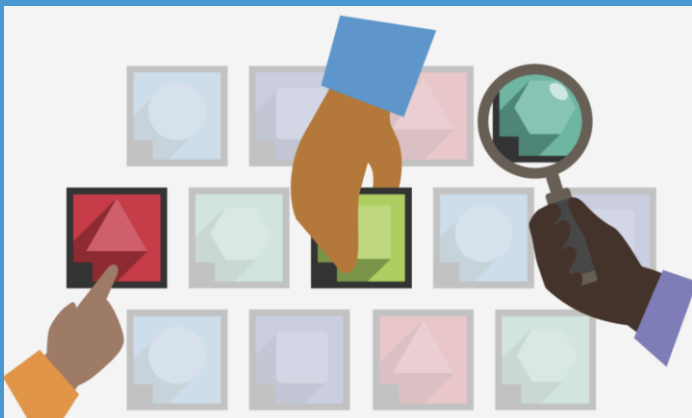


Pathways Initiative



- **Research:** We facilitate adult learner and worker-centered research that seeks to acknowledge and elevate the unique experiences and journeys of historically and systematically excluded populations in an effort to aid in the development of equitable and accessible pathways for learning, skill development, and economic as well as social mobility and sustainability.
- **Design:** We facilitate the inclusive design of learning and employment innovations, as well as technological design and development efforts to ensure equity in accessibility and performance for historically and systematically excluded populations.

Credentials Initiative



- **Building and Rewarding Lifelong Learning:** As people gain new skills throughout their lives they need ways to validate and share what they know and can do. Digital Promise Micro-credentials provide a flexible way to recognize and reward learning and growth no matter where it happens.
- **Micro-credential Platform:** The Digital Promise Micro-credential Platform is used to host, assess, and issue competency-based micro-credentials. With an ever-growing library of topics, Digital Promise is the only non-profit platform providing micro-credentials assessed by experts that recognize performance in real life rather than course participation or completion. With these options, learners can focus on specific skills or competencies they need or are interested in, rather than following a prescribed curriculum.

Conversation Goals/ Key Takeaways:

- Identify challenges and opportunities surrounding non-degree credentialing programs and initiatives.
- Identify strategies for creating equitable, accessible, and learner-centered programs and products.
- Understand ways your organization can work to foster equitable access to skill development and economic mobility, all while adapting to ever-evolving learning and workforce trends.
- Understand the Digital Promise framework for developing competency-based micro-credentials and examples of how micro-credentials can be used to reach organizational learning and development goals.



Equity vs. Equality in Education

Equality



Equity



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Reflective Activity

1. In what ways do you utilize non-degree credentials?
2. What challenges do you face while utilizing non-degree credentials?

Scan below to respond!



Or visit www.menti.com
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Shifting Towards Equity: Identifying Challenges Related to Learner Skill Development and Economic Mobility Navigation



Common challenges experienced by learners

- Barriers to initial awareness and access to affordable learning/ career development resources and opportunities
- Trouble navigating the job market and career advancement (e.g., limited social capital/ networking opportunities, complicated applicant tracking systems, mismatch between job postings and actual skill requirements)
- Lack of wrap around supports (e.g., for caregivers, returning students, rural students etc.), program flexibility and funding

Shifting Towards Equity: Identifying Challenges Related to Learner Skill Development and Economic Mobility Navigation



Common challenges experienced by non degree credentialing providers

- Limited resources and funding constraints
- Communication gaps and lack of program implementation flexibility
- Inequitable internet access, recruitment and retention of qualified staff, and competition from other employers

Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Non-Degree Credentialing Leader Approaches Towards Identifying, Creating, & Sustaining Equitable Solutions



Shifting Towards Equity: Identifying Challenges Related to Learner Skill Development and Economic Mobility Navigation



Common challenges experienced by employers

- Finding qualified workers with verifiable skills
- Upskilling existing employees with limited budget and time constraints
- Providing just-in-time learning and creating professional development pathways

Micro-credentials

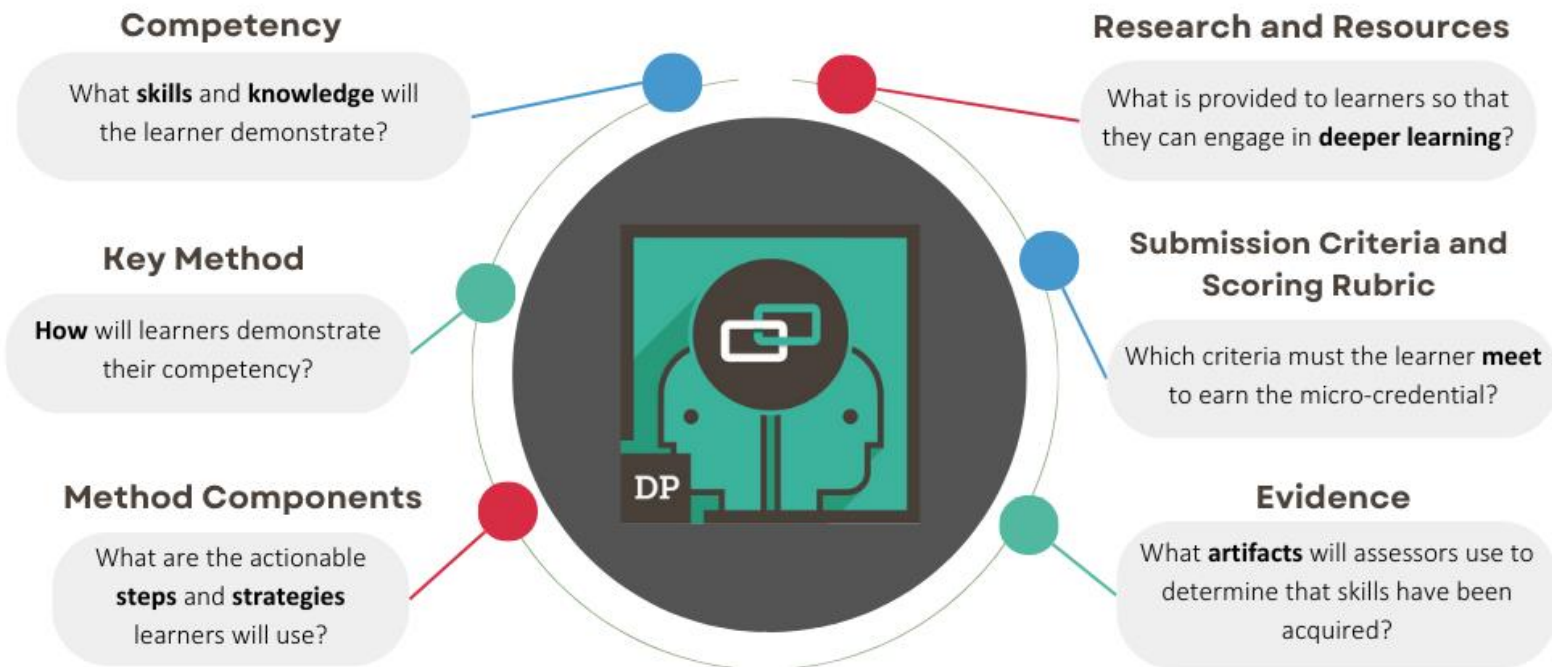
Microcredentials bridge the gap between traditional education and industry needs, providing verifiable proof of in-demand skills.

A Digital Promise micro-credential:

- Focuses on a single competency
- Has a key method that is backed by research
- Provides research and suggested resources
- Requires the submission of evidence
- Includes a rubric or scoring guide
- Is assessed by a human

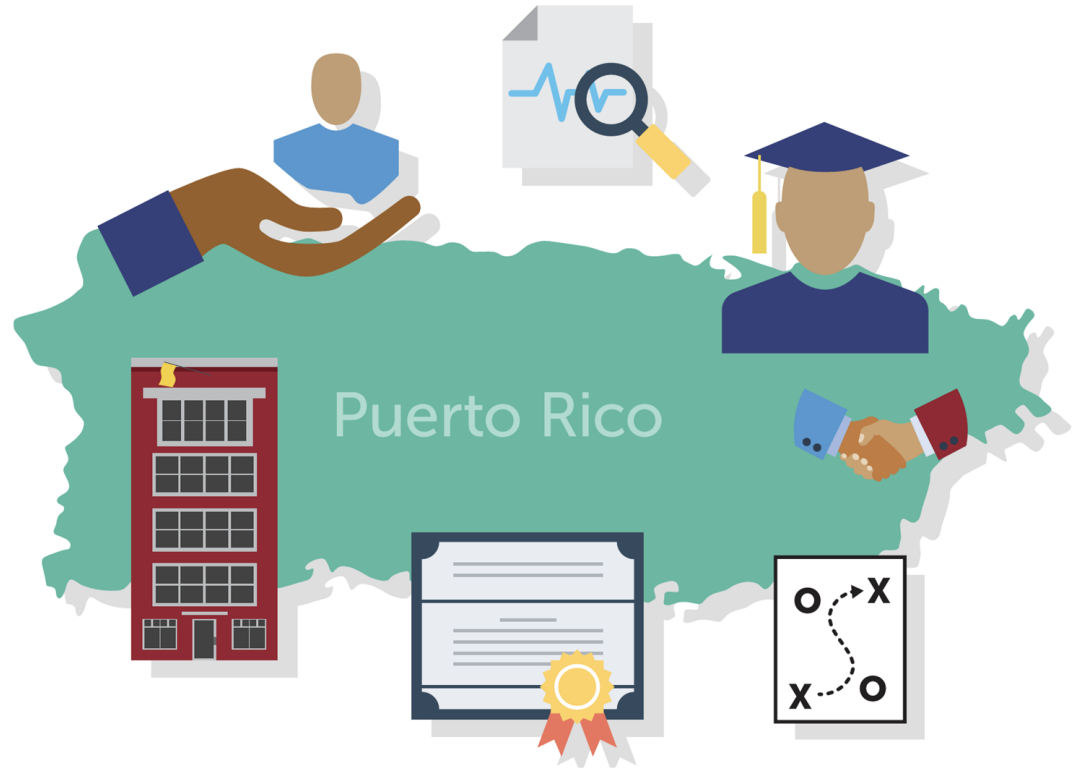
Micro-credentials

Building a Competency-Based Micro-Credential



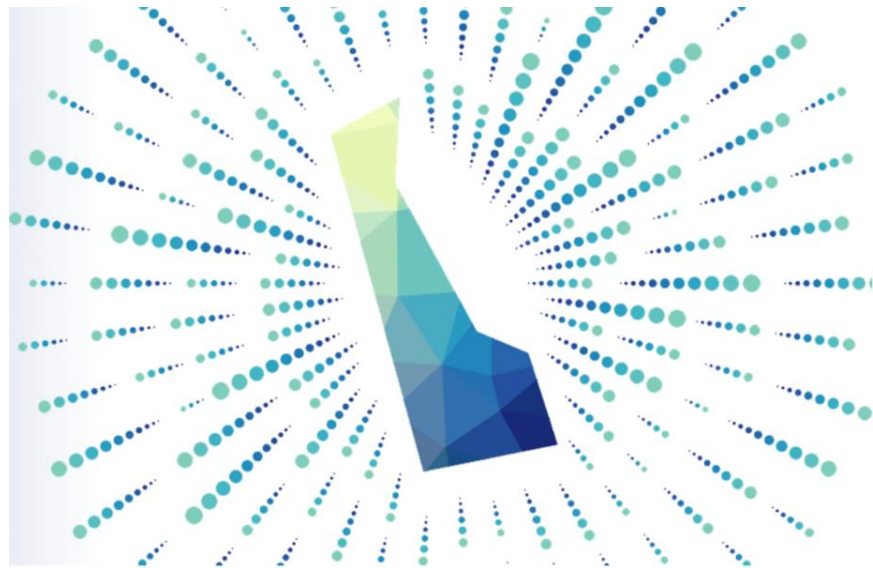
Case Study: Micro-credentials in Puerto Rico

- Partnership with Puerto Rico Department of Education and Global Education Exchange Opportunities
- Pilot to address gaps in coaching structures and pilot challenge-based coaching model
- Educators and coaches earned MCs aligned with coaching activities



Case Study: Micro-credentials in Delaware

- Delaware Department of Education
- MCs as an alternative pathway to earning CE credits for educators
- 10 re-licensure hours for the successful completion of each DDOE micro-credential from two stacks



Visit the DDOE Micro-credentials site

Reflective Activity

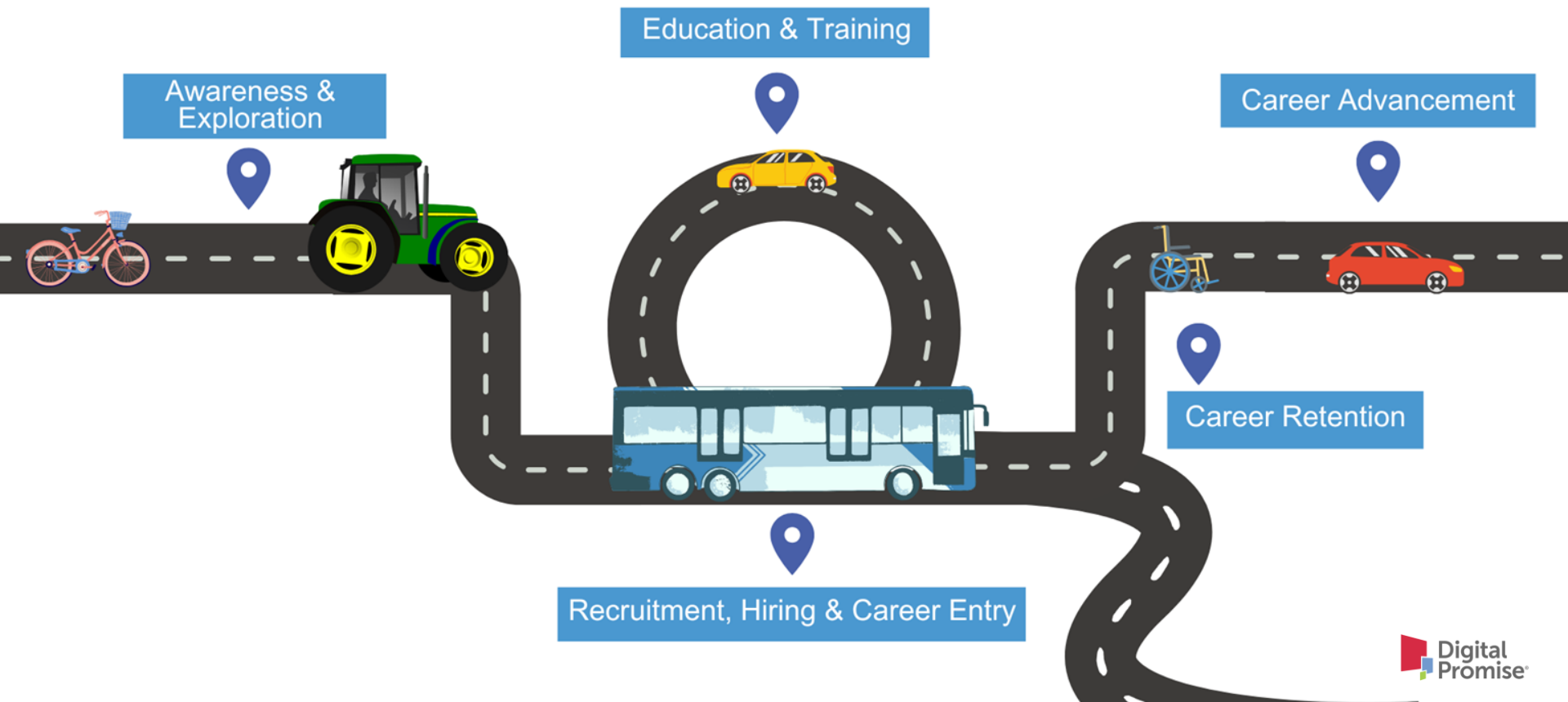
3. Within your own context, what resources do you feel are needed to support equitable creation and or use of non degree credentials?

Scan below to respond!



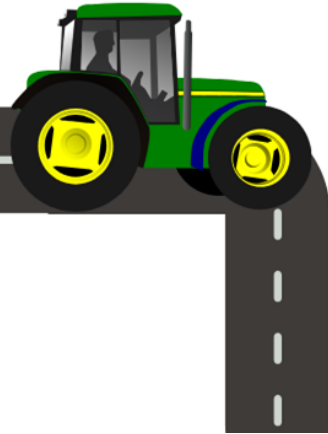
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Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives



Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives

Awareness &
Exploration



- Foster **collaborative partnerships** with HBCUs & MSIs
- Create a **centralized information hub** with one-stop access to industry-based organizations, training and job opportunities
- Have training programs and internships that **target marginalized youth**
- **Increase marketing and promotion efforts** to raise awareness of education/ training programs among potential participants

Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives

Education & Training



- Help learners **build social capital/ network** with employers
- Create **collaborative partnerships** with education/training providers and employers to **bridge gaps between program completion and job placement**
- Show exactly where **talent shortages** are occurring, and **train learners on the exact skills** that employers are seeking
- **Improve communication and flexibility** to better meet the diverse needs of participants and communities served
- **Address systemic challenges** (e.g., limited internet access in rural areas) to ensure equitable access to program resources

Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives



Recruitment, Hiring & Career Entry

- Educators help with **optimizing resumes** for AI screening.
- Employers **create skills-aligned and inclusive job descriptions**, and use more **equitable applicant tracking systems**
- **Increase** recruitment/ hiring process **transparency**
- Create **mentorship programs** and **increase communication** between schools, training programs and employers
- **Prioritize diversity and inclusion** training
- **Increase diverse visibility** and industry **representation** at job fairs, hiring teams, etc.

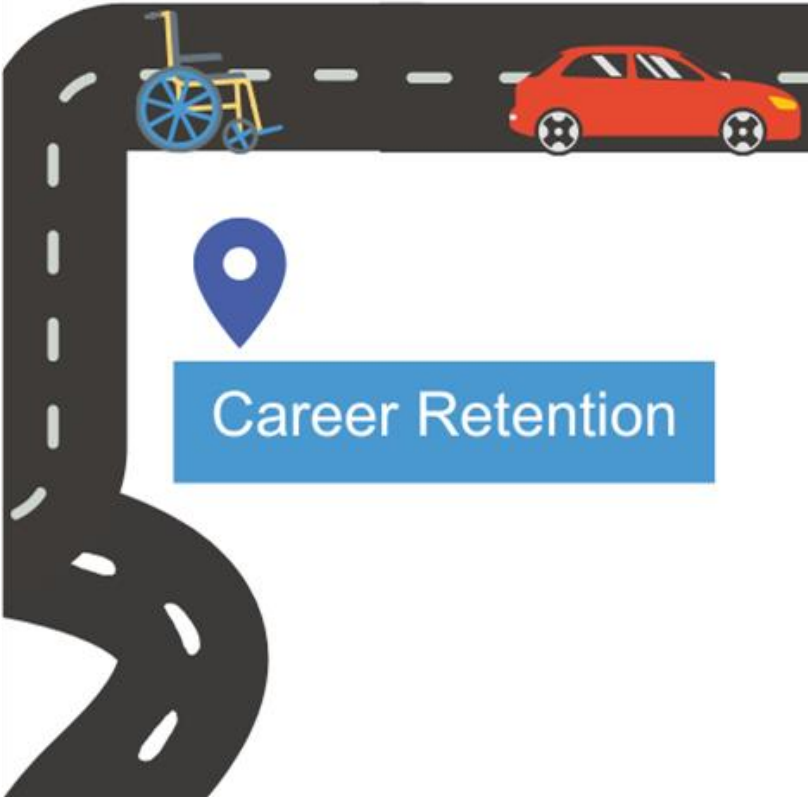
Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives

Career Advancement



- Provide **continuous professional development** opportunities
- Increase **access to employer networks, mentorships, and sponsorships**
- **Diversify higher positions** in each industry. **Believe in and encourage marginalized workers' identity and participation**
- **Be transparent and accountable** about promotion paths and diversity goals/ metrics
- Provide more **clear and accessible pathways** for career advancement and better support for individuals pursuing higher education degrees

Learning & Career Pathway Supports: Sample Co-Designed Recommendations & Learner Perspectives



- Provide **access to wrap-around supports** and support groups for various identities
- Provide **opportunities** for individuals to **network and upskill** to keep up with the ever-changing industry trends
- Support **work-life balance/ flexibility**
- Consider **adjustments to salary and benefits** to attract and retain qualified staff, acknowledging the challenges posed by low compensation

Implications & Action Steps

1. Build awareness of existing disparities & challenges



Systemic barriers to initial awareness and exploration



Barriers to access to affordable resources and opportunities



Limited networks/ social capital impacting job market navigation



Career development stifled and job insecurity

2. Advocate for policies and investments for the following supports



Holistic support networks/ accessible wrap around services



Exposure and networking opportunities to increase social capital

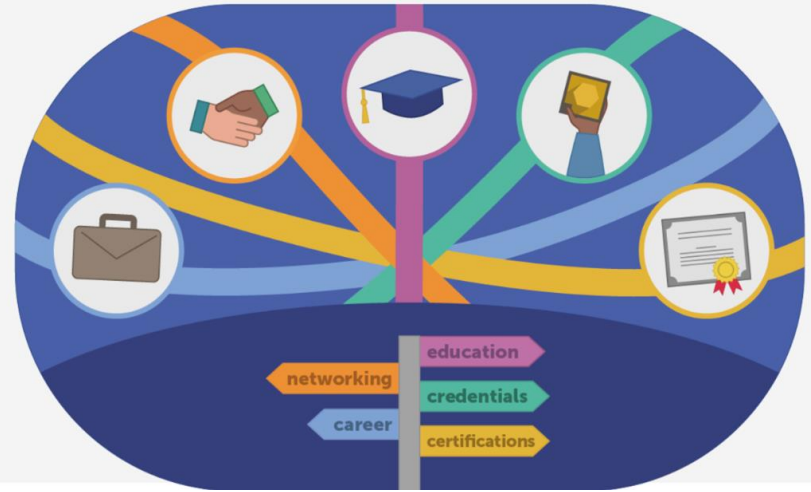
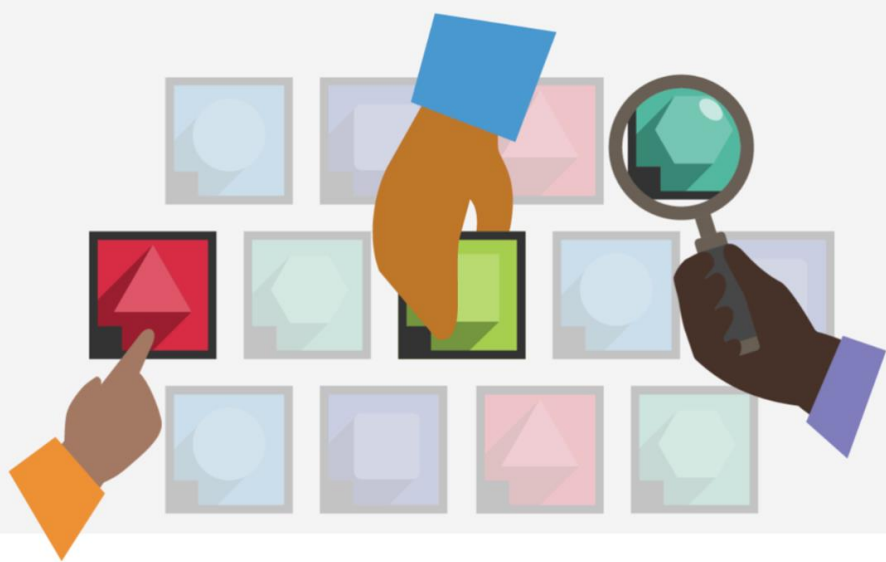


Affordable digital resources & competency-based upskilling opportunities



Collaborative partnerships to facilitate systems level changes to enable equitable pathways

3. Continuously prioritize and analyze retention strategies



Thank you! Questions?

For more information please contact the team at:
pathwaysandcredentials@digitalpromise.org

Scan the QR code or visit <https://digitalpromise.org/sign-up/>
to subscribe and receive Digital Promise updates!



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