

# DEMYSTIFYING MICRO-CREDENTIALS

## Digital Badges, and Alternate Credentials

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COLLEGES  
DISTRICT



Malcolm Baldrige  
National Quality Award

2018 Award Recipient



# THE ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT: Empowering Our Diverse Communities for Success



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## Mission

Empowering our diverse communities for success by **building and strengthening each College's capacity** to deliver premier, quality digital learning experiences for students.



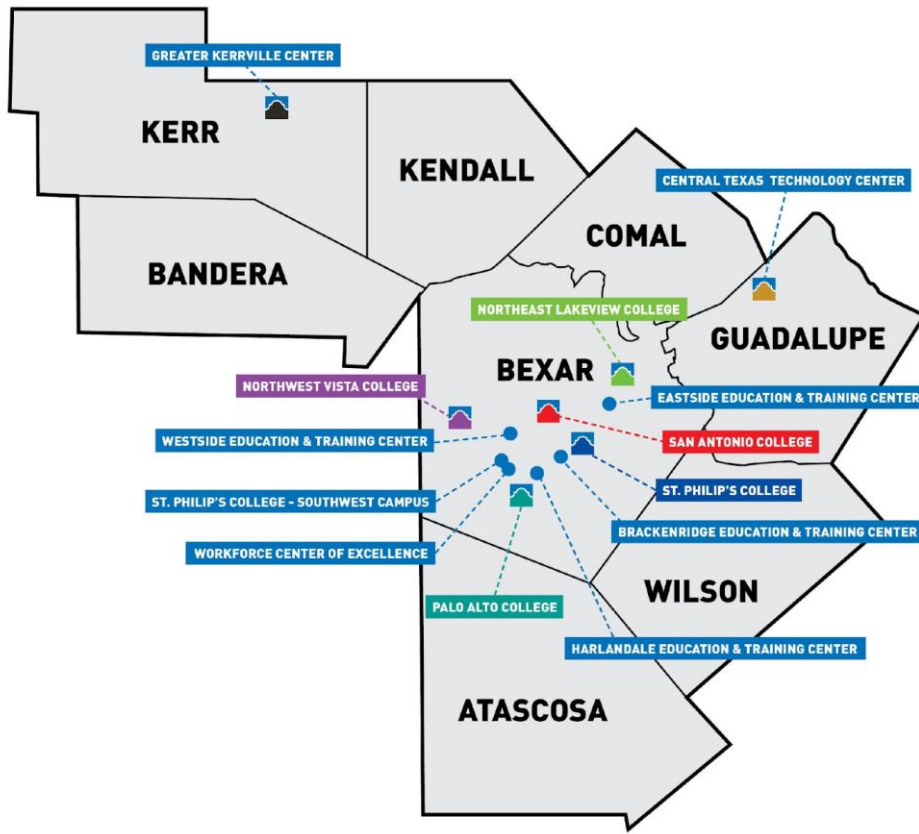
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Achieving LEADER  
the Dream COLLEGE  
OF DISTINCTION

## Alamo Colleges District San Antonio, Texas

- 5 community colleges
  - **San Antonio College**
  - **St. Philip's College**
  - **Palo Alto College**
  - **Northwest Vista College**
  - **Northeast Lakeview College**
- 8 regional & neighborhood centers
- 16 Early College High Schools



# Online Student Profile Fall 2022

## Ethnicity

**10.8%** African-American  
**2.4%** Asian  
**65.7%** Hispanic  
**19.2%** White

## Enrollment Status

**26.2%** Full-time  
**73.8%** Part-time

## Ages

**35.8%** 18–21  
**16.9%** 22–24  
**19.7%** 25–30  
**10.7%** 31–35  
**13.8%** 36–50

## Gender

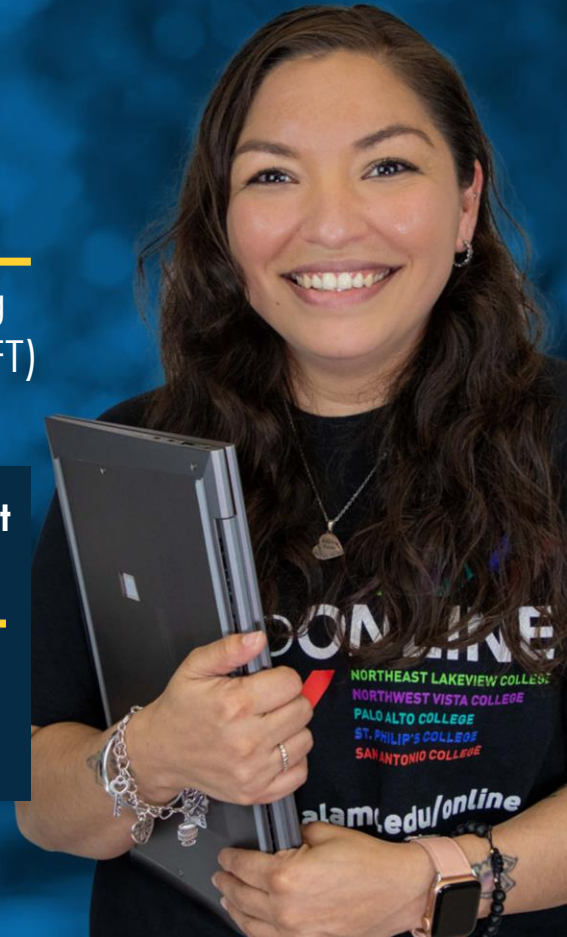
**64.7%** Female  
**35.3%** Male

## Student Type

**77.1%** Continuing  
**12.9%** First-time (FT)  
**9.9%** FT Transfer

**8.0** Avg. Credit Hours

**26.9** Avg. Age



Source: Certified CBM0C1, Certified CBM0CS, Census Day Course Data, SZRTXSI, SGRSACT (Preliminary) – pulled 1/20/2023



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# THE SKILLS MARKET: Bridging Skills Gaps



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## The “Uniquely Human” Skills Gap

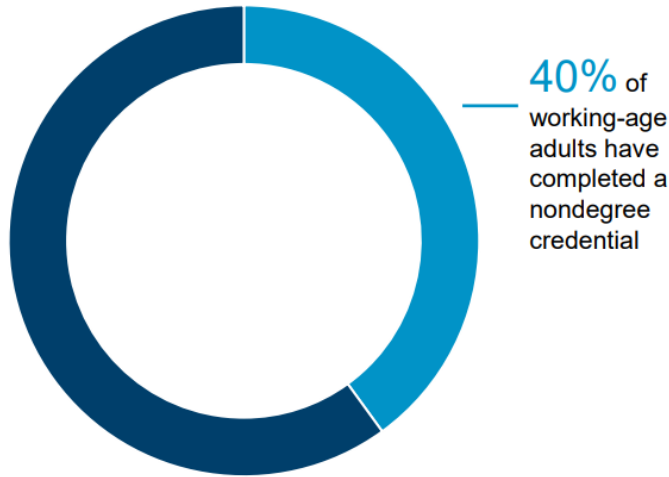
**Uniquely Human Skills** - Critical Thinking, Communication, Empathy, Teamwork, Resilience, etc.

- 65% of Schoolchildren Will Work in Jobs That Have Yet to be Invented
- 75% of Employers Can't Find New Graduates with “Soft Skills”
- 92% of Surveyed Executives Say “Soft Skills” are Equally or More Important than Technical Skills

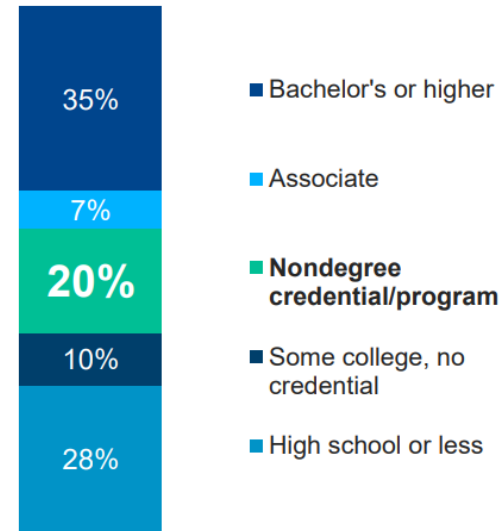


## 2 in 5 working-age adults have completed a nondegree credential; 1 in 5 report it as their highest level of education

### Nondegree credential attainment



### Highest level of education



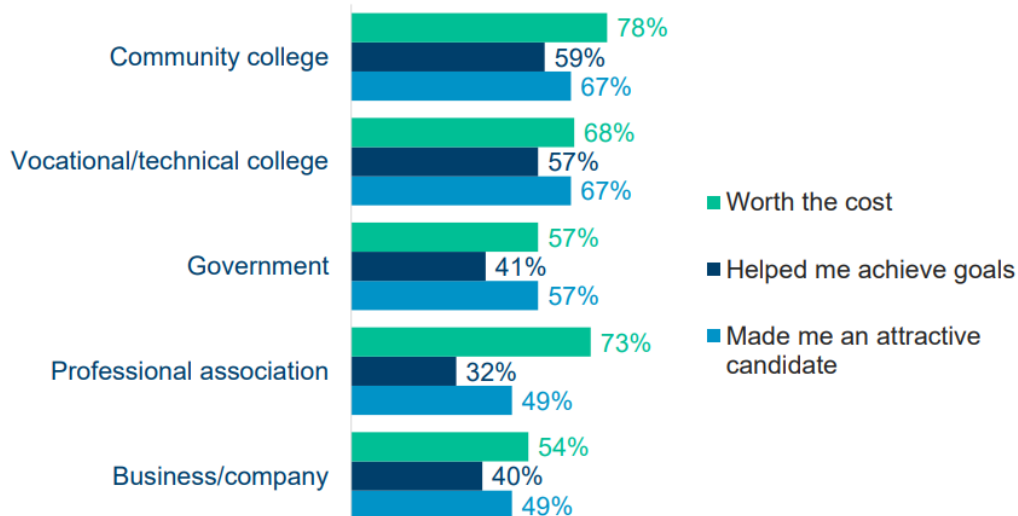
BASE: 25- to 64-year-olds (n=12,023)





## Nondegree credentials issued by community colleges have the highest alumni ratings, while those issued by individual businesses and companies have the lowest

Alumni ratings (strongly agree/agree) by provider type

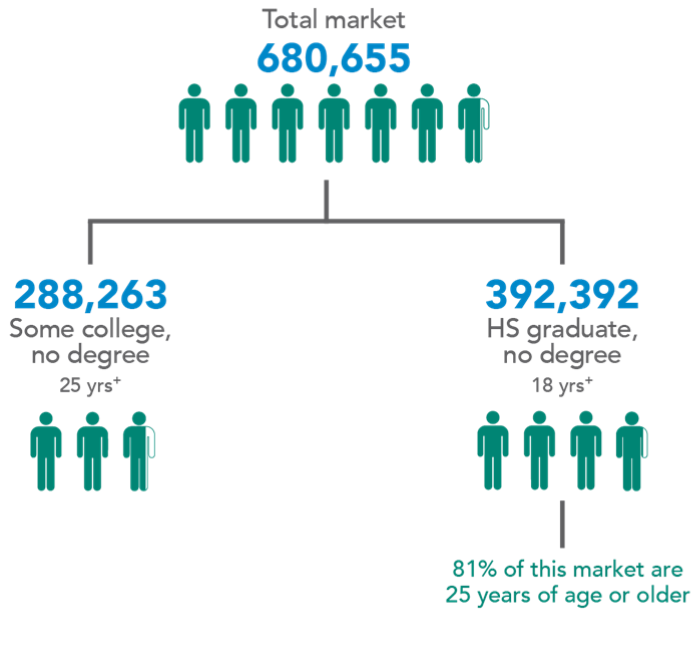


Share of adults with a nondegree credential

BASE: 25- to 64-year-olds with an educational certificate who report a nondegree credential as their highest level of educational attainment (n=5,492)



# In-district market of workers to micro-credential



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Data | 2020: 5-Year Estimates | Educational Attainment | Extracted County Data



**MICRO-CREDENTIALS:**  
**Making Skills**  
***Accessible, Portable, Visible***



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# What is a micro-credential?



## Non-college-credit training focused

on a single skill or cluster of skills



## Study, practice, and improve

upon a specific skill quickly



## Signals the completion

of a skills-based learning experience

## Digital Badges

One type of micro-credential offered by the Alamo Colleges



## Two types of learning experiences

that result in a digital badge at our Alamo Colleges



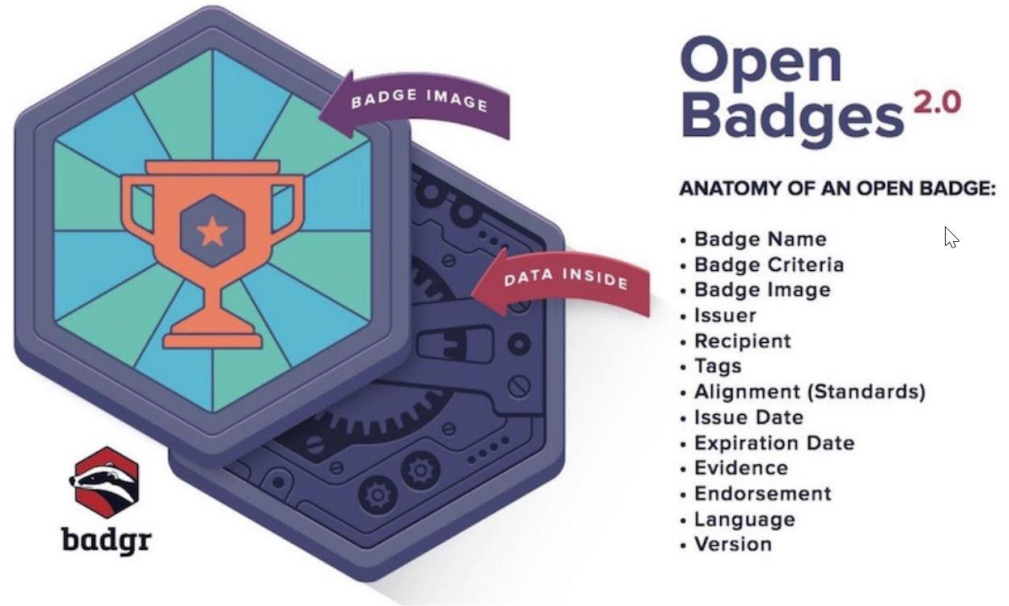
- **In a micro-course**  
Online, on-demand training
- **10-15 hours**  
to complete

- **Within a college-credit course**
- **Same length as course**  
depending on requirements



## What is a Digital Badge?

- Digital credentials that people earn by demonstrating a skill
- Consist of an image and metadata
- Aligned with Open Badges 2.0 standards
- Shareable on social media platforms



Badgr. (2021). Open Badges Backpack 2.0 [Infographic]. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2021, from <https://info.badgr.com/resources/open-badges-backpack-2.0.html>



## The Why

- Empower students for success by **awarding verified micro-credentials (including digital badges)** that **articulate in-demand marketable and technical skills** to employers
- Increase **social mobility** and position students for greater **competitiveness** in the job market

## Guiding Principles

- Include skills assessments
- Represent in-demand skills
- Credentialed faculty members and trainers



## Digital Badge Taxonomy Approved Types

- **Marketable Skill** – Demonstrate a base-level, marketable skill that aligns with each College's core objectives (i.e. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).
- **Skill** – Demonstrate a base-level, marketable or technical skill. Measured with a CBE Assessment.
- **Ability** – Demonstrate skill consistently. Measured as a culmination (Externship, fieldwork, etc.).
- **Certification** – Demonstrate desired skills by completing a series (i.e. Level I Certificate, Industry Certificate).
- **Articulation** – Demonstrate skills in a non-credit training and receive credit (i.e. Credit for Prior Learning).



# THE SKILLS LAB: Supporting Skills Development & Providing Training Solutions



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# The Skills Lab

## What We Do

- Train faculty/staff to embed skills badges in credit-bearing courses
- Train faculty/staff to facilitate micro-credential learning experiences
- Design and deliver employability skills training that result in micro-credentials
- Collaborate with the Colleges and local employers to design new micro-credentials
- Support the development of micro-pathways at the Colleges



# ENGAGING FACULTY: The Course+ Badge Initiative



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## Course+ Badge Purpose

To **build students' marketable skills** by incorporating **digital badges into academic courses** that are offered in an upcoming semester

### Overview

- Invite, train and support 25 faculty members across the district
- Pay each faculty member a \$1,000 stipend to
  - Redesign one of their courses to integrate a marketable skills digital badge
  - Teach at least one section of the Course+ Badge

### Funding

- Received an Alamo Colleges Participatory Budget Grant 2020-21
- Received Student Success Fund investment in 2021-22



## Course+ Badge Description

- 10-week online training that guides faculty through the badge integration process which includes:
  - Mapping skills in course content
  - Creating skill assessments
  - Some minor to significant course redesign
- Completers receive a Badge Specialist Digital Credential

## Format

- Asynchronous—weekly assignments in Canvas
- Synchronous (via Zoom)
  - 2 – faculty discussions
  - 2 – instructional design consultations




## Marketable Skills Badges

- Collaboration
- Creative Problem-Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Empathy
- Initiative
- Intercultural Fluency
- Oral Communication
- Resilience



## Fall 2020 – Summer 2022

- 6 Faculty Cohorts
- 139 Badge Specialists 
- 83% Completers are **Very Confident** in replicating Badges into other courses

*“Going through this course helped with my knowledge of Badges, but also made me reflect on my curriculum for the course.”*  
- Faculty Badge Specialist



# 2,526 Total Marketable Skills Badges Awarded

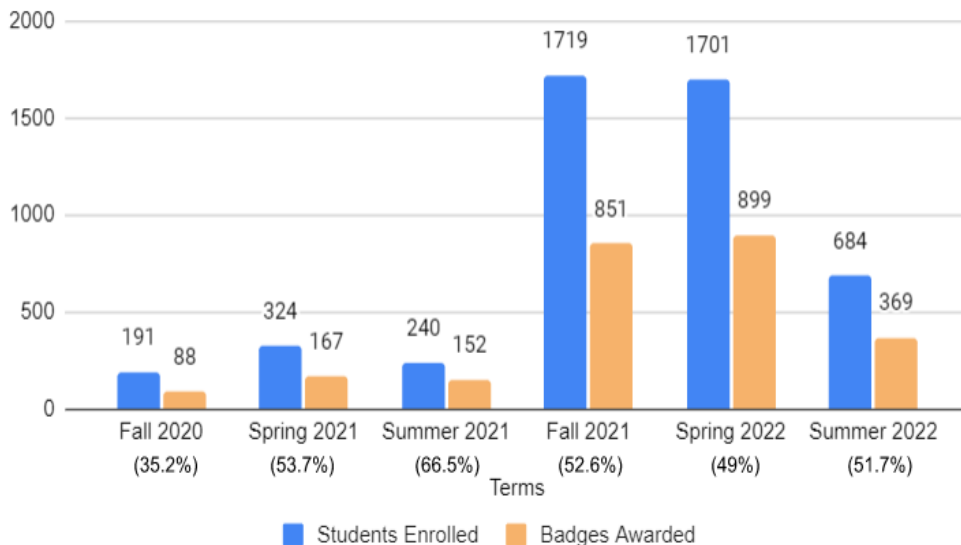
## Fall 2020—Summer 2021

- **407** badges awarded
- **755** students enrolled

## Fall 2021—Summer 2022

- **2,119** badges awarded
- **4,104** students enrolled

Course+ Badge FA20 - SU22



# ENGAGING FACULTY: Creating a Community of Practice



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## Purpose

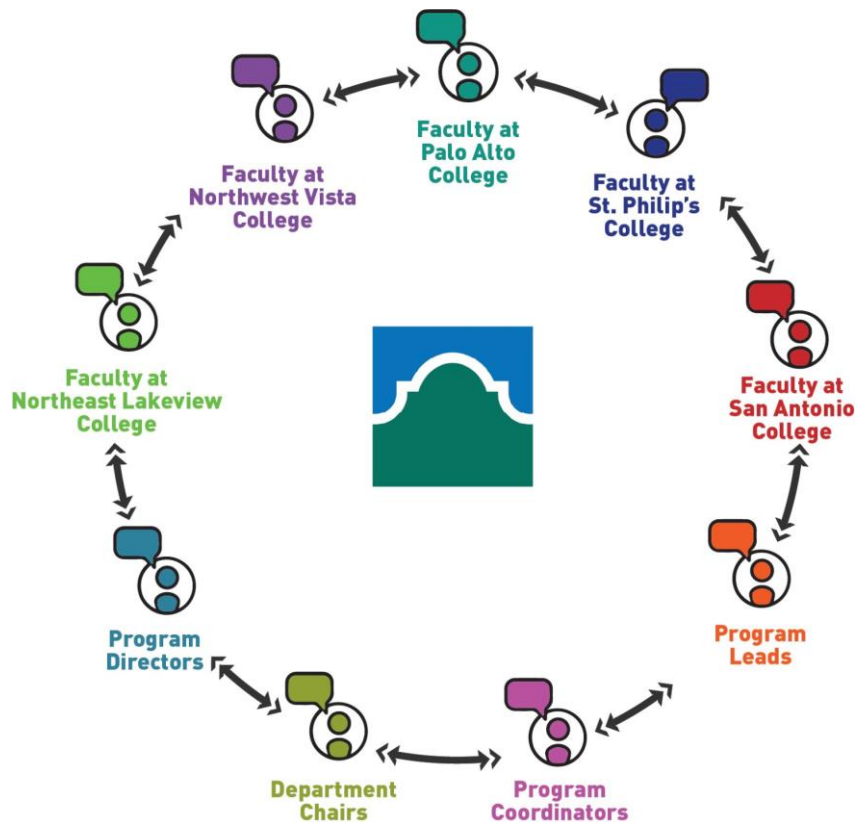
To **BE** a thought leadership and a practitioner support group for those professionals who are **awarding verified digital badges** that **articulate in-demand marketable skills** to employers.

## How

Sharing ideas, mining best practices, informing decisions

## Who

Faculty or staff who are Badge Coaches or Badge Specialists



## Participant Expectations

- Participate in two synchronous events per semester
- Participate in discussion forums
- Give constructive feedback to proposed frameworks and initiatives
- Be an ambassador for marketable skills



# ENGAGING EMPLOYER PARTNERS: Creating Credentials in Context



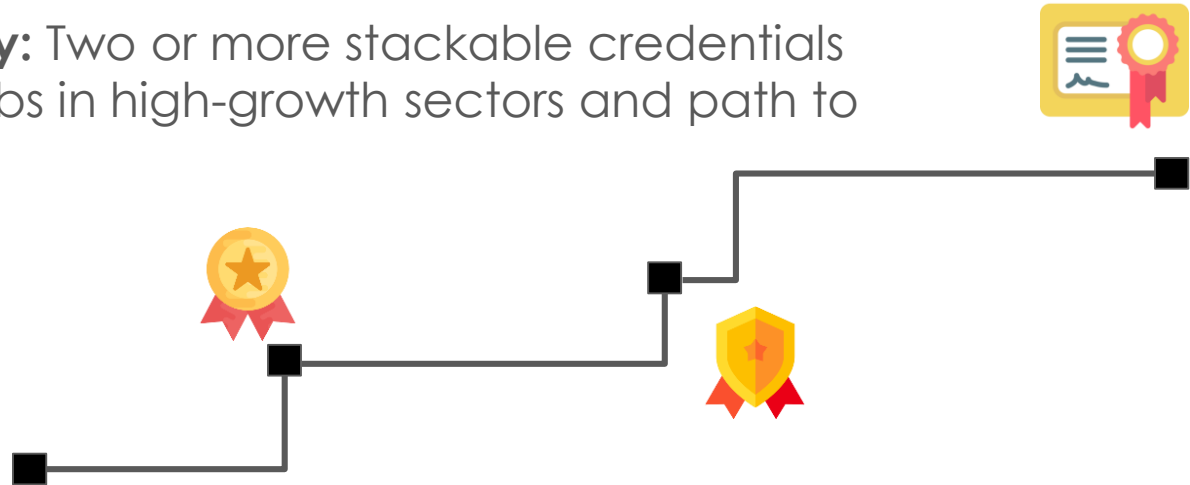
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## Micro-courses and Micro-pathways

- **Micro-course:** A short (10-15 hrs), non-credit learning experience that focuses on a single in-demand skill and results in micro-credential.
- **Micro-pathway:** Two or more stackable credentials that lead to jobs in high-growth sectors and path to a degree



## Industry Partnerships | Healthcare

Late Fall 2021, we received two large state grants to **design micro-pathways** and **develop micro-credentials**. We engaged local healthcare employers in the following ways:

- **Feedback Sessions:** Met with local healthcare employers individually, in team meetings, and at a workforce conference
- **Curriculum Development:** Recruited Subject Matter Experts from local healthcare employers
- **Badge-to-Hire:** Worked with a local healthcare employer to guarantee job interviews for digital badge micro-course completers.



## Industry Partnerships | Healthcare

- **15 New Micro-courses** leading to employer-validated digital badges\*
  - \*Includes technical and marketable skills
- **4 New CE Micro-credential Programs** leading to certifications
- **5 New Micro-pathways** to make career progressions accessible and visible





## Industry Partnerships | Employability Skills

Micro-courses facilitated by a **certified Badge Coach**, wherein worker-learners earn the following badges:

- Professionalism and Work Ethic
- Career Management
- Written Communication
- Oral Communication
- Collaboration
- Resilience





## Micro-credential Partnerships | Google



### THECB Credentials of Value Tracking

- Anticipate one system based on a national credential registry will be used
- Google partnership and badges have given us strategic lead



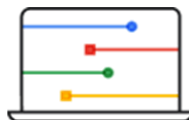
Data Analytics



Digital Marketing & E-commerce



IT Automation with Python



IT Support



Project Management



UX Design





# Questions?

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# **BONUS MATERIAL:** Learner Feedback



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## Qualitative Comments

*"I took this course while applying for new jobs. Believe it or not, the exercises forced me to really think about my previous experiences. **I had an interview a few days ago and I was so relaxed and confident because of the exercises - the interviewers loved me and I start my new position on Monday!!**"*

- Learner, **Resilience** Micro-course



“I feel that I have most definitely honed skills that I was just mediocre at. And with this experience I honestly feel more confident and more capable in different situations that can come up on a daily basis at work... **I am already looking into starting the summer session at Northeast Lakeview College.**”

- **Goodwill San Antonio Employee**  
and Badge-earner

