XCredit Skills Validation Network
Group Charter + Plan

November 2022 - June 2023

The XCredit Skills Validation Network seeks to enable equitable opportunity for individuals who are Skilled Through Alternate Routes (STARs) through diverse, proven methods of skills validation, empowering them with valuable credentials in the skills-based economy.

The mission of the Network is to expand the methods, tools, and opportunities available to validate skills gained through work and life experience for individuals skilled through alternate routes (STARs), leveraging Education Design Lab’s 21st-century skills competency framework, the XCredit ecosystem, and the Network’s collective resources and expertise.

Why Validation?

The field is coalescing around the need to shift from a broken and inequitable system of learning and work to a more equitable, visible skills-based ecosystem. Just as the old system was powered by degrees, this new system must also be powered by a trusted currency, one that learners, employers, and educational institutions alike deem valuable: Skills.

There is tremendous potential for a skills-based ecosystem to help solve this issue. In a skills-based ecosystem:

- College is reimagined as skills-based programming, which may but does not always lead to a degree.
- The degree is reimagined as skills-based credentials of all kinds – short-term, stackable, competency-based.
- And hiring systems are reimagined to be skills-based as well, matching the skills needed for a role with the skills possessed by a candidate.

In other words: skills-based programming leads to skills-based credentials, which are leveraged in skills-based hiring.

We at the Lab believe in a skills-based ecosystem as a model to drive in a positive and more equitable direction. But in some ways, it’s still inadequate. There are vulnerabilities in this new model, when thinking about its long-term sustainability.

It’s not enough for the future system to be skills-based. It must be validated-skills-based. This means that skills gained and credentialled, and then shared with employers, must first be validated (see definition on page 2).

Without validation, there’s a lot of assumption and guesswork involved. This might look like asserting that because someone has worked as a receptionist, they have effective customer service skills. These assertions haven’t been fully validated and may actually be false.

As employers and other stakeholders evaluate the trustworthiness of this new skills currency, this poses a risk to the adoption and sustainability of all skills-based efforts long-term.
The Network has two distinct goals:

1. **Prototype a set of new skills validation tools and methods**, aimed at empowering STARs (individuals Skilled Through Alternate Routes) with valuable labor market currency along with agency, mobility, and visibility in a rapidly changing skills-based economy. They will do so by leveraging Education Design Lab’s 21st century skills competency framework, the XCredit ecosystem, and the Network’s collective resources and expertise.

2. **Provide thought leadership**, to help drive a national dialogue around the criticality, terminology, and methods of skills validation, offered by leading thinkers and doers from diverse organizations across the skills-based ecosystem.

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### Network Overview

The XCredit Skills Validation Network is an action-oriented, future-focused community which seeks to expand opportunities for the validation of skills gained through work and life experience. The Network will serve as a conduit to the exploration, development, advancement, and collaboration between career navigation systems, job placement and worker advancement organizations, skills data sets and platforms, and skills wallets and ecosystems.

Over the course of 8 months (November 2022 → June 2023), Network members will collectively prototype a set of new skills validation tools and methods, and provide thought leadership to drive a national discourse.

The Network has thus far brought together a group of innovators from 10+ organizations from across the skills-based ecosystem committed to these goals, in service of expanding opportunity and improving economic mobility for STARs (individuals Skilled Through Alternate Routes). In partnership with the Lab, these Members seek to leverage the Network’s collective resources and expertise to pursue that which individually would not be possible.

Network Members will participate in bi-monthly Network convenings, and engage in Network activities aligned to their own interests and priorities, such as:

- Engaging in the co-creation of skills validation prototypes by providing tools, technologies, data, ontologies, ideation, and/or thought partnership
- Serving as an XCredit ecosystem entry point
- Licensing XCredit assessments for use with own stakeholders
- Providing pilot/testing users or employers
- Providing an additional ecosystem
- Conducting own research in XCredit ecosystem
- Co-authoring publications
- Co-presenting at events

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### What is skills validation? *(working definition)*

The process by which an assertion (“I assert that I have a skill!”) is substantiated.

- Typically conducted by qualified 3rd party
- Creates trust that individual possesses a skill
- Based on a shared understanding of meaning of a skill
- Indicates level and context of a skill
- Can be conducted through various methods

![Diagram: Assertion → Validation → Market Signal]

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### What is a prototype?

An early example or model created to test a concept. It’s a tool both to communicate and to learn about a concept being developed. Prototypes allow for rapid testing, iteration, and refinement of concepts. Because they often fail, they allow designers to learn from mistakes or abandon flawed ideas before investing too heavily.

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### What does it mean to be a thought leader?

The Lab seeks to engage Network members who are the go-to people in their field of expertise. They are trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas, turn ideas into reality, and know and show how to replicate their success. The resulting work of Network members during will support in equipping others to scale their ideas into sustainable change, not just in one organization, but across the entire ecosystem.
Inaugural Network Members

The Lab has identified leaders from across the skills-based ecosystem that are well-versed in critical technologies, data, and initiatives that strengthen cross-system coordination between stakeholders and drive a resilient economy.

Objectives + Deliverables

- **Objective:** Identify definitions for terminology related to skills validation efforts.  
  **Deliverable:** Published *Glossary of skills validation terminology* to support the field.

- **Objective:** Research current efforts in skills validation to build upon what currently exists.  
  **Deliverable:** Published *Environmental Scan* documenting the current state of skills validation and non-academic PLA.

- **Objective:** Generate prototypes of tools and methods for skills validation.  
  **Deliverable:** *Prototype library* of skill validation methods and tools.

- **Objective:** Conduct testing of skills validation prototypes.  
  **Deliverable:** Published findings based on prototype testing.

- **Objective:** Pursue shared exploration and learning together, as a Network.  
  **Deliverable:** Published insights and other thought leadership on emerging learnings from the Network.

- **Objective:** Identify recommendations for further exploration, to be conducted by the Network or others in the field.  
  **Deliverable:** Published recommendations for others seeking to engage in skill validation work.

Skill-based hiring depends on trusted skill signals. I’m interested in ways to build widely trusted signals.

Scott Gullick  
*Director of Platform Partnerships*  
Opportunity @ Work

The current talent marketplace devalues lived experience. Scalable skills validation empowers for opportunity.

Naomi Boyer  
*Executive Director, Digital Transformation*  
Education Design Lab

Without skills validation, the whole concept of skills becoming the new currency fails.

Jeff Fiske  
*Vice President of Production*  
Muzzy Lane Software
The Network’s Design Arc

**UNDERSTAND**
- O: Understand Terminology Publication
- O: Conduct Environmental Scan Publication

**IDEATE**
- O: Ideate Prototypes Publications + Presentations: Emerging Learnings

**PROTOTYPE + PILOT**
- O: Create + Pilot Prototypes
- O: Expand beyond 21st cent skills.
  - Publications: Findings
  - Publications + Presentations: Emerging Learnings

Network Responsibilities

**Lab Responsibilities**
- Coordination of the Network to nurture dialogue and advancement of skills validation.
- Recruitment of Members with interest and motivation to contribute to work in skill validation.
- Enhance visibility of Network Partners in Network communications and presentations such as social media, webinars, website content, and earned media.
- Provide the skills ecosystem to explore, test, and conduct research on skills validation.
- Provide the competency framework and assessments.
- Provide integrations via LTI, where applicable.
- Provide a platform to deploy all skills assessments, and dashboards for (l)earner progress tracking.
- Award the digital micro-credentials via a badge issuing system.
- Provide a system for user authentication via an identity provisioning system for seamless connectivity into the ecosystem.
- Uphold and respect all individual NDA agreements and intellectual property rights of Members.

**Network Member Responsibilities**
- Attend quarterly and ad-hoc meetings with Skills Validation Network Members.
- Communicate responsively on topics related to the work of the Skills Validation Network.
- Provide thought partnership, data, and materials as requested to contribute to the betterment of the work of the Network.
- Align to the Lab’s emphasis on outcomes which drive toward equitable access to meaningful, economically sustaining work for STARs.
- Treat all Members of the Network with respect, to value other perspectives, and to allow space for the expression of ideas.
- Uphold and respect all individual NDA agreements and intellectual property rights of Members.
Education Design Lab

Education Design Lab ("The Lab") works as a boundary-spanning intermediary that works in the space between education providers and the workforce, bringing deep expertise in human-centered design, skills-based solutions, and emerging technology. The Lab designs, tests, and scales new models, products, and tools with and for New Majority Learners that address systemic and environmental barriers to success and help to prepare learners, educators, and employers for the emerging digital skills economy. The Lab’s philosophy is to co-design “with” opportunity seekers to unpack the perspectives, lived experiences, motivations, and unique needs to inform solution design. The Lab engages multiple stakeholder perspectives in its design processes - including opportunity seekers, education providers, employers, industry associations, standards bodies, technology vendors, and nonprofit organizations to design and test solutions that help education move at the speed of business. These stakeholders are engaged in a skills movement at the margins; however, ultimately, forward progress in the skills ecosystem will require traversing the boundaries and establishing both internal and external data flow to express skills and achievements.

XCredit

XCredit ("experience-credit") provides opportunity seekers with an interoperable ecosystem of tools for experience-based skills validation and discoverability. Leveraging the Lab’s 21st-century skills competency framework, XCredit allows (l)earners to turn their intangible or invisible skills, gained informally through work and life experience, into validated tangible credentials that are visible to employers seeking talent. Using XCredit, (l)earners will verify and credential existing skills utilizing a variety of techniques. This will enable them to signal skills they have gained through experience to employers, who will search for talent with desired skill sets. By the end of their experience, (l)earners will be able to apply their validated skill sets to matching job opportunities.