

Micro-pathways: A model to drive statewide transformation efforts in Montana

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Micro-pathways: A model to drive statewide transformation efforts in Montana

- **We're using a human-centered design approach to develop in-demand career pathways and energize the workforce ecosystem**
- **HCD is less about the product and more about the process**
- **HCD helps us understand who needs what, who has capacity or resources, and who's responsible for which components of implementation**

The “Design Accelerator” Question

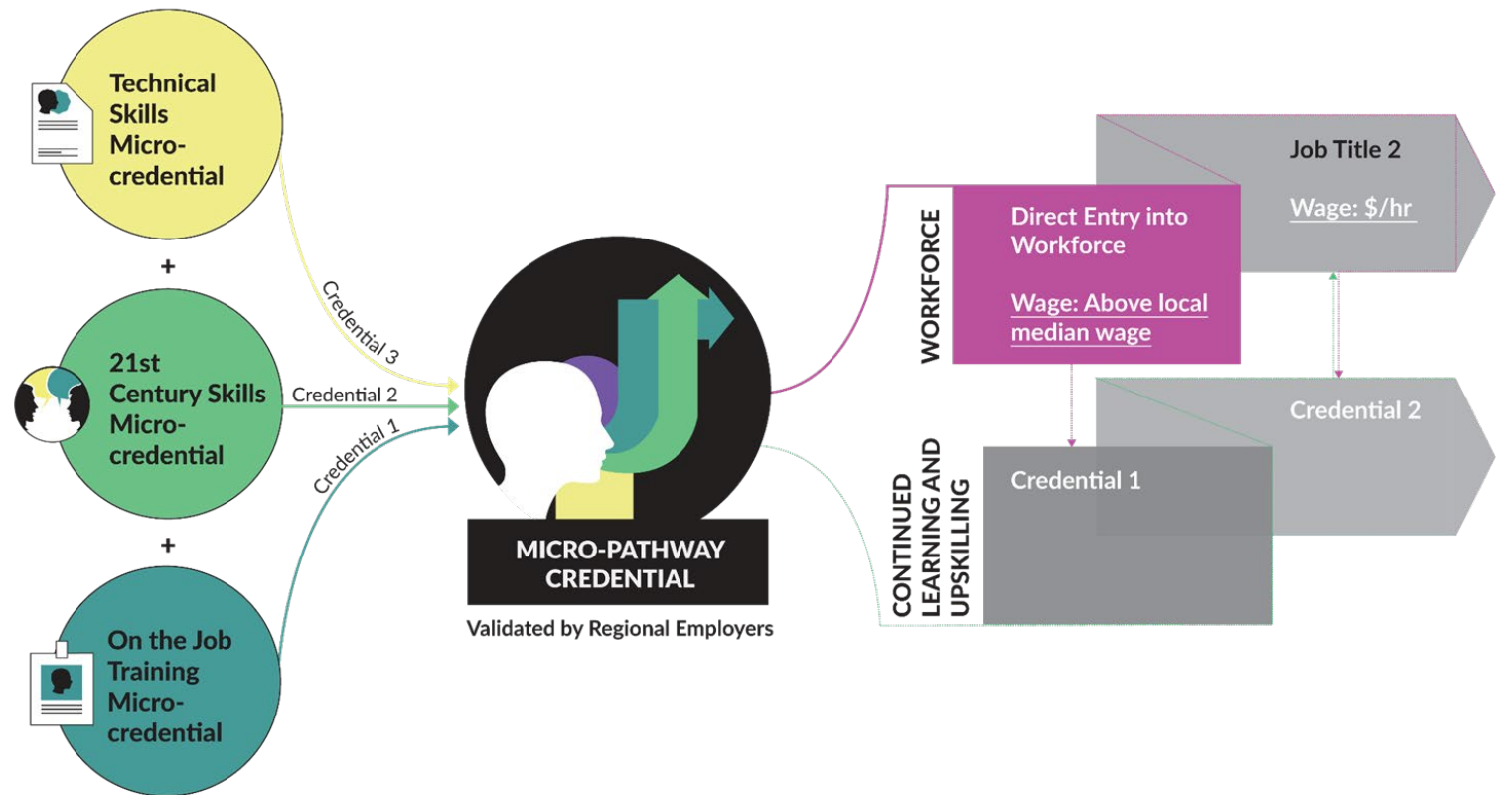
How might we design equitable and accessible micro-pathways toward high-growth careers endorsed by employers and visible to learners moving from post-secondary education into the workforce?

Defining Micro-pathways

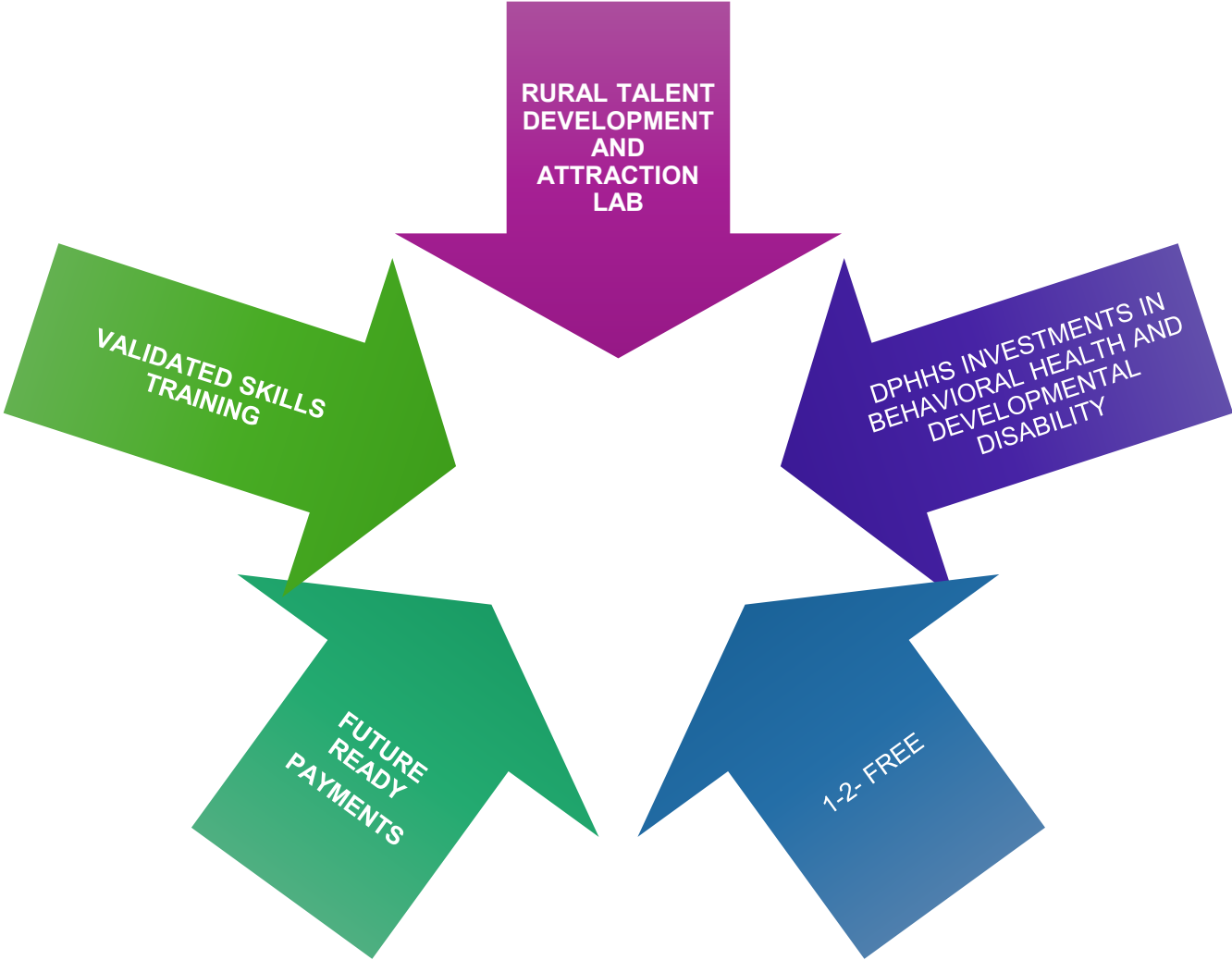
In this new time, we need a new class of credential that is more aligned to the market, designed for learner needs, and faster than traditional offerings.

Micro-pathways:

A new model to better address program **affordability, flexibility, relevance, portability, and visibility** to meet the needs of a rapidly changing knowledge economy.

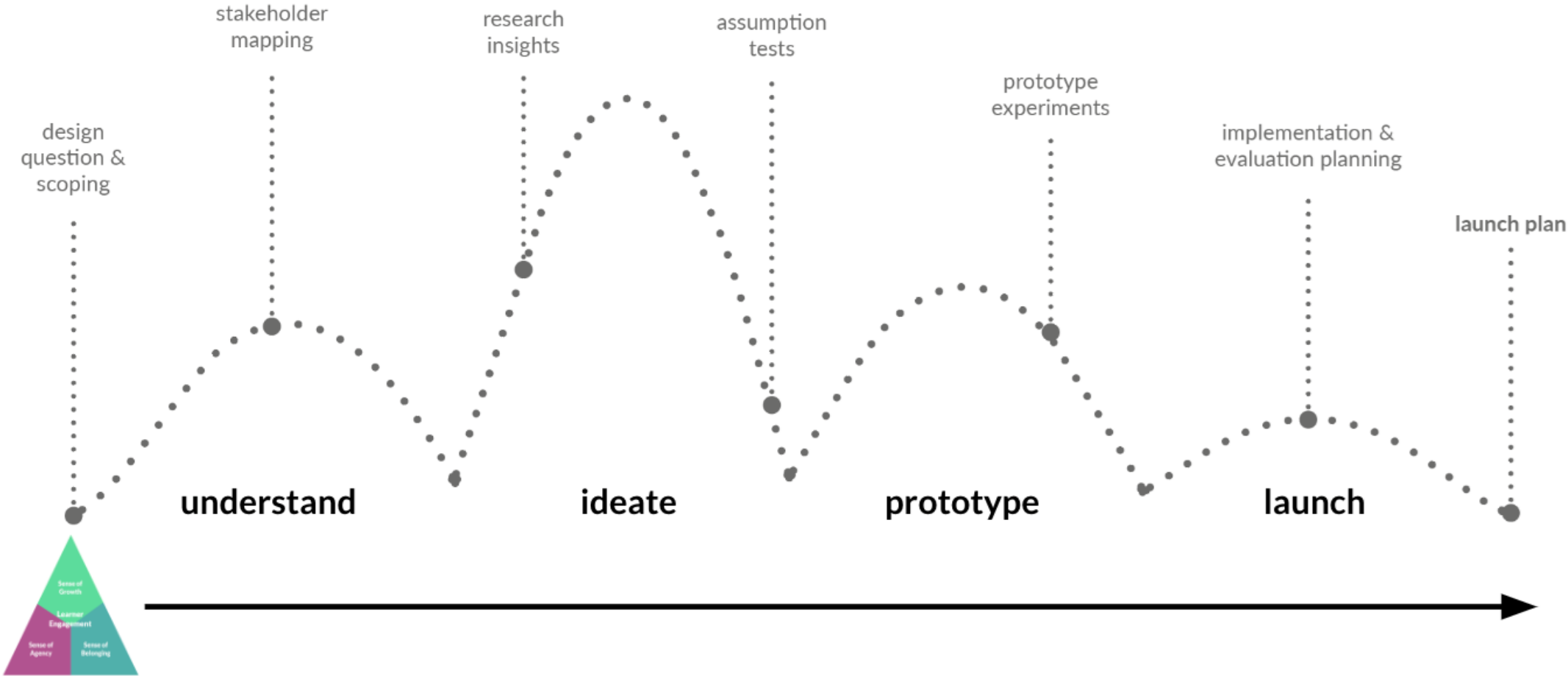


CONNECTING MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM INITIATIVES

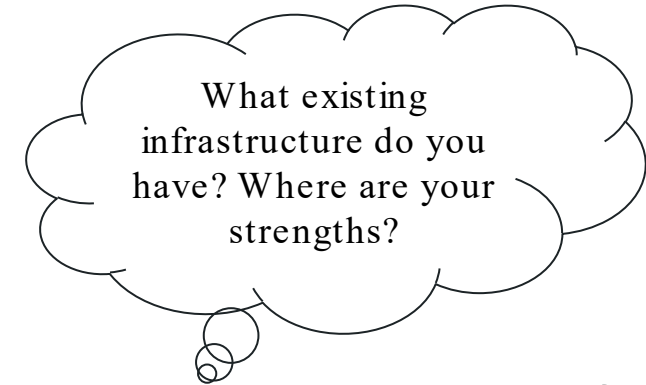


The Lab's Design Process

Collective vs Individual



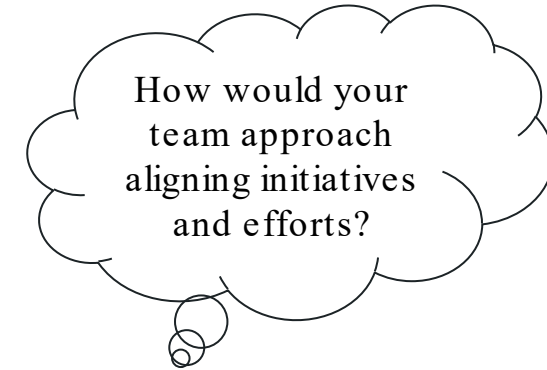
P1: Pre-Design



What we did: We worked through the formalities of introductions, reviewed the scope of work, and signed college participation and data sharing agreements.

What we learned: We learned about in-demand certifications and credentials colleges already offer. The challenge was making the programs shorter, more flexible, less costly.

P2: Understand



What we did: We engaged employers in skills-mapping sessions, industry partners in surveys, learners in interviews and focus groups, and college leaders in skills crosswalks.

What we learned: We learned that there are live initiatives and partnerships in place we can capitalize on, by combining efforts and streamlining our approach to energizing the workforce ecosystem.

P3: Ideate & Design

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and a small tail at the bottom left. Inside the bubble, the text reads: "How is your team connecting in-demand skills to existing curriculum?"

How is your team connecting in-demand skills to existing curriculum?

What we did: We drafted curriculum and courses, created I(earner) personas, and developed journey maps that informed the student experience from enrollment to completion and into the workforce.

What we learned: We learned we could take in-demand skills identified by employers and extract relevant curriculum from associate degree programs, creating stackable and employer validated pathways.

P4: Prototype & Iterate

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and a small tail at the bottom left. Inside the bubble, the text reads: "How can we indicate project success, even with small cohorts?"

How can we indicate project success, even with small cohorts?

What we did: We designed pathways considering modality, embedded work-based learning opportunities, and strategies for providing financial and student support.

What we learned: We learned that rural communities may have large growth rates in talent needs, but even a 200% growth rate could mean a small number of jobs.

P5: Launch

How do we start to talk about this, so stakeholders who benefit can participate?

What we did: Marketing strategies like creating program flyers, hosting virtual and in-person open houses, and recruiting incumbent workers for upskilling were used to cultivate interest in the programs.

What we learned: We learned that employers and learners may lack familiarity with the availability of short-term credentials and pathways and are more inclined toward traditional degree programs.

University of Montana Western

A Micro-pathway to Become an *Early Childhood Education Teacher*

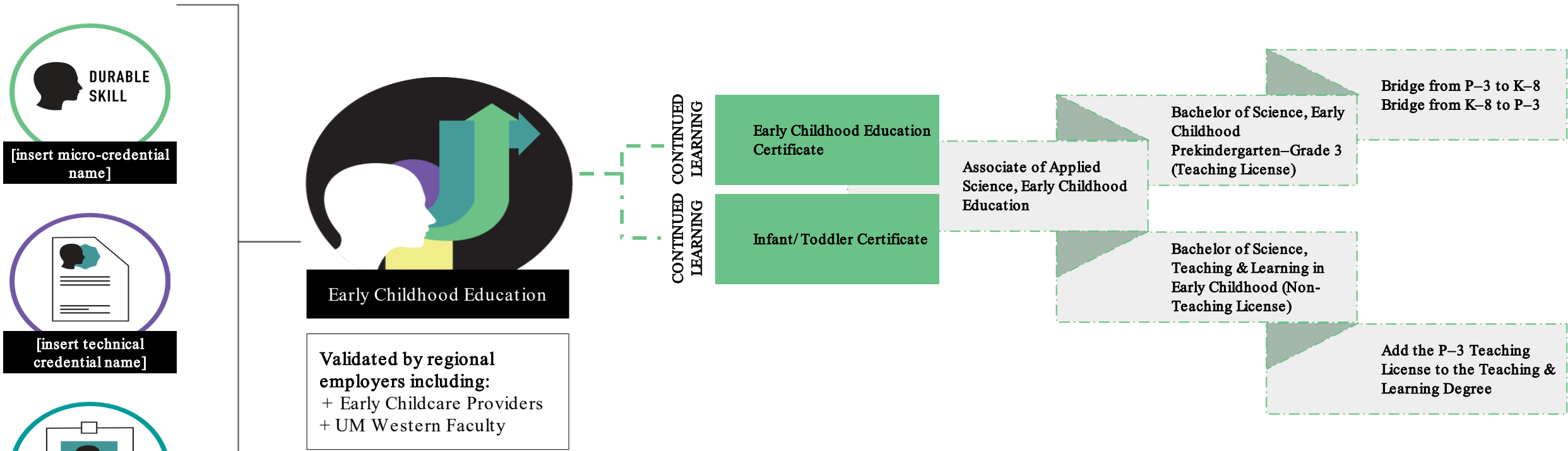
Issued by



Designed with



FUTURE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



[insert micro-credential name]



[insert technical credential name]



[insert work-based learning name]



Early Childhood Education

Validated by regional employers including:
 + Early Childcare Providers
 + UM Western Faculty

Legend

- 2+ Stackable Credentials
 Credentials + Courses articulate to Credit
 Credits count towards a Degree.
- Technical Skills Credential
- Durable Skills Digital Micro-Credential
- Work Based Learning Credential
- Direct Entry into Workforce
- Direct Entry into Continued Learning
- Continued Learning and Upskilling Opportunities

PHASED APPROACH SUPPORTED OUR STATEWIDE STRATEGY BY ALIGNING ALL MUS INITIATIVES TO MEET WORKFORCE GOALS



PHASE II COMPONENTS

Micro-Pathway and Dual Enrollment Design

Address talent and skills gaps in the workforce, expanding access for high school students

Statewide Marketing Campaign

Promote programs, highlighting career opportunities and available financial assistance

Tribal College Design Sprint

Identify skills and credentials that best support economic mobility, with consideration for the cultural contexts of tribal communities



Education Design Lab



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Thank you!

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