

February 2025



Stakeholder Insights on Skills Validation

Report 3: Value Propositions

An Education Design Lab Publication

About Education Design Lab

The Education Design Lab (the Lab) is a national nonprofit that co-designs, prototypes, and tests education-to-workforce models through a human-centered design process focused on understanding learners' experiences, addressing equity gaps in higher education, and connecting learners to economic mobility.

About the Center for Skills Validation

The Center for Skills Validation is an entity, hosted by the Lab, focused on designing, prototyping, piloting, and demonstrating quality skills validation processes and tools to enable skills validation at scale. The Center houses Education Design Lab's portfolio of skills validation work, including existing projects such as XCredit and its Skills Validation Network. The Center stands alongside the Community College Growth Engine as a flagship Lab initiative focused on building equitable, skills-based pathways and credentials for both employers and STARs (those who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes, as opposed to a bachelor's degree).

The center's key objectives:

- + Drive experimentation and research.
- + Enable scale and delivery of skills validation tools and methods.
- + Support automation, access, and integration of skills validation into the broader skills ecosystem.
- + Provide technical assistance and capacity-building support in skills validation.
- + Defining the field and making the case for skills validation.

Related Publications

- + [Skills Validation Guidebook: 10 Steps to Design a High-Quality Skills Validator](#)
- + [Stories of Validation: Empowering New Majority Learners and STARs Through Skills Validation](#)

Learn more at the [Skills Validation Network website](#).



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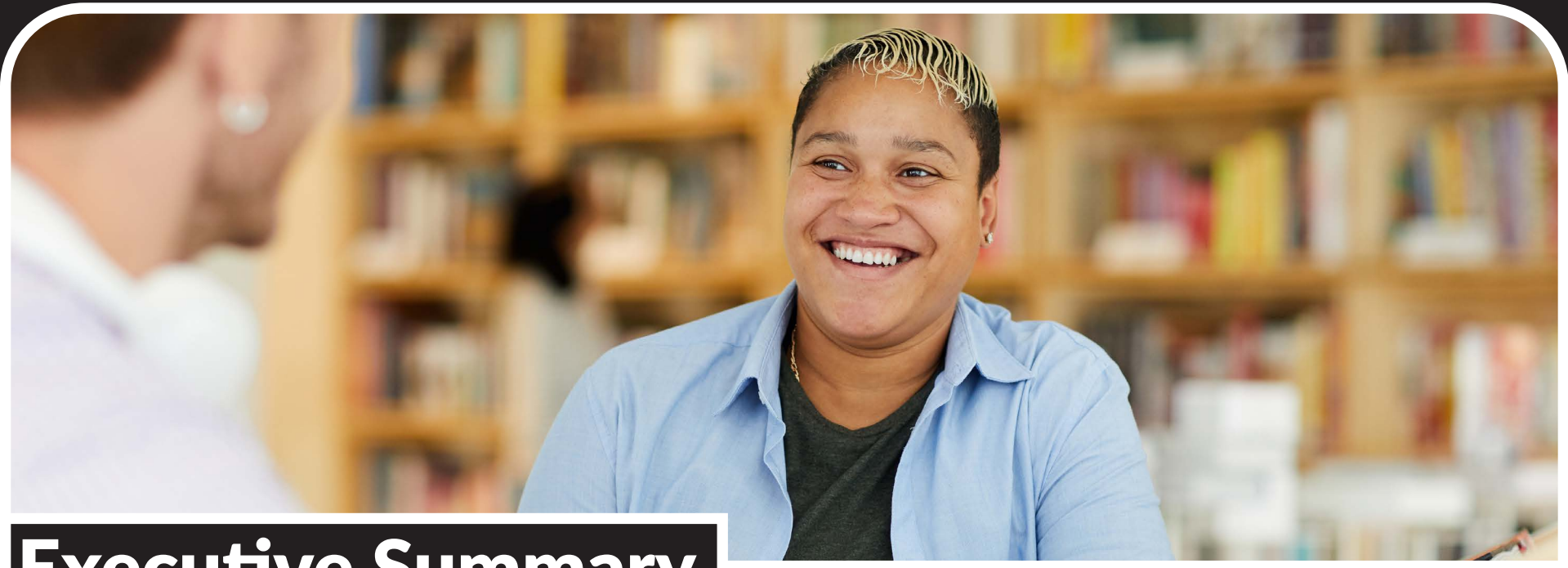
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Executive Summary

Skills validation — the process of substantiating an individual's skills through trusted methods — is foundational to creating an equitable, skills-based ecosystem. This shift is particularly urgent for STARs (individuals Skilled Through Alternative Routes), who represent over 70 million workers in the U.S. but face declining economic mobility despite possessing valuable skills.

Stakeholder Insights on Skills Validation: Value Propositions is the third report in a three-part series from Education Design Lab's Center for Skills Validation. It explores the tangible and intangible benefits of skills validation for both STARs and employers and provides actionable insights for designing value-driven validation systems.

The first two briefs, **Report 1: Barriers** and **Report 2: Use Cases**, focused on identifying how STARs and employers currently engage with skills validation, along with the barriers that limit its potential.

[Read them here](#) 

Executive Summary

Drawing on a year of research, this report identifies five key early insights:

1. Validated skills open doors to career advancement for STARs.

Skills validation enhances visibility and credibility, allowing STARs to access better job opportunities, strengthen their position when negotiating raises or promotions, and build valuable professional networks.

2. Skills validation boosts confidence and alleviates imposter syndrome.

Beyond career outcomes, skills validation significantly improves STARs' self-perception and confidence. This is particularly important for STARs who may face doubt or feel excluded in professional settings due to lacking traditional credentials. Validation provides concrete evidence of their abilities, helping to shift the narrative from self-doubt to confidence.

3. For employers, skills validation reduces hiring risks.

By providing verifiable proof of competencies, validation enables organizations to make more informed hiring decisions, reducing the costs associated with poor hires and improving workforce quality.

4. Employers leveraging skills validation can access a broader and more diverse talent pool.

Skills validation promotes inclusivity and workforce diversity. By shifting focus from degrees to demonstrable skills, employers can broaden access to opportunities for underrepresented talent and make hiring decisions based on ability rather than credentials.

5. Skills validation fosters trust in hiring, promotions, and internal mobility decisions.

A transparent, data-driven validation system builds trust between employers and employees, ensuring career advancement decisions are based on verified skills rather than subjective judgments. This strengthens internal mobility and long-term workforce development.

Actionable Insights

To enhance the value of skills validation for both STARs and employers, it is essential to strengthen its accessibility, credibility, and alignment with workforce needs. Key strategies include:

- + Expanding validation methods to formally recognize skills gained through diverse work and life experiences.
- + Developing tools and resources to help STARs articulate and leverage their validated skills for career growth.
- + Conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of skills validation on STARs' careers and employer outcomes.
- + Strengthening technological infrastructure to ensure validated skills are transferable across platforms and systems.
- + Collaborating with employers to align skills frameworks and validation methods with real-world job requirements.
- + Building trust through transparency, ensuring employers have confidence in the rigor and credibility of validated skills.

Looking Ahead

This brief is the third in a three-part series examining skills validation for key stakeholder groups. Previous research identified stakeholder barriers and use cases for STARs and employers. As the skills-first movement gains traction, continued innovation in validation systems will be key to unlocking economic mobility for STARs and building a more dynamic and inclusive labor market.



Defining Key Language


STARs:

STARs is a term coined by [Opportunity@Work](#) for individuals Skilled Through Alternative Routes. They are the 70+ million workers who have gained skills on the job, through military service, community college, or other alternative routes. STARs are over 25, active in the workforce, and have a high school diploma.

Equity:

When we close economic, resource, and opportunity gaps across the learn+work ecosystem, and in turn, outcomes are not predictable based on someone's identities (adapted from [Creative Reaction Lab](#)). [🔗](#)

Introduction

Note: The Introduction and Methodology sections are the same as in the first two reports. If you're familiar with this content and would like to skip ahead to the insights, [click here](#). 

Over the past two decades, STARs (individuals Skilled Through Alternative Routes) have faced diminishing economic mobility. This decline is often attributed to a perceived lack of skills or insufficient education and training. However, the reality is more nuanced: STARs frequently possess valuable skills that remain unrecognized and unvalidated, limiting their opportunities for career advancement.

At the same time, employers are grappling with persistent talent shortages, prompting many to rethink traditional, degree-based hiring practices.





In this growing skills-based movement, a critical question arises:
How do we validate skills in a workforce expanding beyond degrees?

Skills validation involves a comprehensive process of assessing, validating, and documenting an individual's competencies and abilities in specific areas. This multifaceted approach goes beyond traditional credentials and degrees, aiming to accurately capture and authenticate skills acquired through various means, including work experience, life experiences, and alternative learning pathways.

This process is central to enabling the shift toward a skills-based ecosystem, ensuring that individuals' competencies are recognized and valued in both learning environments and the talent marketplace.

Skills Validation

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

-  Typically conducted by a qualified third party
-  Creates trust that an individual possesses a skill
-  Based on a shared understanding of the meaning of a skill
-  Indicates the level and context of a skill can be conducted through various methods



Introduction

This movement is beginning to reshape the relationship between key actors in the skills ecosystem, including:

- + Opportunity seekers, such as STARS
- + Employers
- + Education and training providers
- + States
- + Associations and intermediaries
- + Technology platforms/vendors

Each participant in this ecosystem has a critical role to play, and it is essential for all stakeholders to be engaged as co-creators in the design process.

Our goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of each stakeholder, both independently and in their interactions within the broader ecosystem. Stakeholder research is a cornerstone objective within the Center for Skill Validation's broader mission to advance the skills-based ecosystem. By pursuing this holistic understanding of stakeholders and their interactions, we aim to contribute to the creation of a more responsive, equitable, and effective skills-based ecosystem that benefits all participants.

To start, we are focusing on:

- + Opportunity seekers
- + Employers

We believe these stakeholders are central to the ecosystem. They are most impacted by changes and must be prioritized in the redesign process. As we advance this work, centering our efforts on the experiences and needs of these key stakeholders is crucial.

About This Brief


The Lab's Center for Skills Validation seeks to understand the experiences of employers and STARS with skills validation.

We started with three foundational questions:

1. What barriers to adoption exist for different stakeholder groups?
2. What use cases exist for different stakeholder groups?
3. What are the leading value propositions for different stakeholders to adopt skills validation?

This inquiry has culminated in a three-part brief, with each part addressing a specific question and offering early insights for both key stakeholders.

This brief, **Stakeholder Insights on Skills Validation Report 3: Value Proposition**, delves into the multifaceted benefits of skills validation for STARS (Skilled Through Alternative Routes) and employers. It highlights how skills validation drives external outcomes, such as improved hiring results and increased opportunities for internal mobility, while also fostering internal benefits, including enhanced confidence and a reduction in imposter syndrome. By examining the tangible and intangible value that skills validation offers to diverse stakeholders, this report provides actionable insights to design systems that are both efficient and equitable, addressing the evolving needs of the workforce.

The first brief, **Stakeholder Insights on Skills Validation, Report 1: Barriers**, focuses on identifying the barriers that limit the potential of skills validation, while the second brief, **Stakeholder Insights on Skills Validation Report 2: Use Cases**, examines when and how skills are currently being validated by both STARS and employers. [Read both here](#) 

Methodology

STARs

Education Design Lab (the Lab) conducted a survey with STARs to understand their experiences with skills validation. The survey included balancing for gender, age (25-60), highest level of education, and status of their career journey.

The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey Audience. Responses with less than six minutes of completion time or incomplete surveys were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 83 respondents.

Survey data is supplemented with qualitative insights from existing literature and discussions with the Skills Validation STARs Panel. The STARs Design Panel is a co-design group consisting of six STARs. Over four months, this panel shared their experiences and collaborated on designing new methods for skills validation. By directly involving STARs in the process, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and co-create solutions that are centered around their experiences.

Employers

The Lab conducted a survey with employers to understand their experiences with skills validation. The survey was balanced for gender, age (25-60), size of the organization (over 50 employees), and job function (full-time Human Resources roles). It was administered via SurveyMonkey Audience. Responses completed in less than six minutes or incomplete surveys were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 66 respondents.

This survey data is supplemented with qualitative insights from existing literature and discussions with the Employer Brain Trust. The Employer Brain Trust — a select group of six employer partners formed by the Lab — collaborates to provide insights, and feedback, and design innovative work+learn solutions for New Majority Learners.

Over three sessions, this panel shared their experiences and feedback on new methods for skills validation. By directly involving employers in the process, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and co-create solutions centered around their experiences.

Note: While the findings provide valuable insights, the initial sample size requires framing them as “early hypotheses.” We remain committed to a rigorous research process, aiming to validate and refine these hypotheses as our work progresses. By maintaining transparency, we seek to build trust in the potential of these findings and lay the groundwork for further research and development.

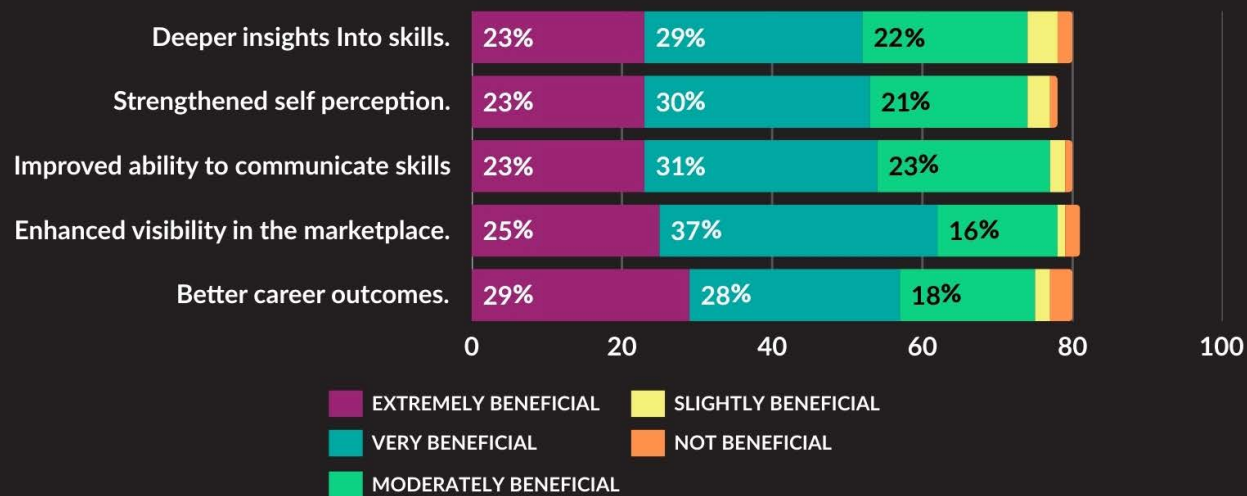


Value Propositions of Skills Validation

Value proposition refers to the specific benefits and impact that a product, service, or process provides to its intended users, addressing their needs and demonstrating its unique value. It articulates why something matters and how it improves outcomes for those who engage with it.

In the context of skills validation, value propositions highlight the tangible and intangible benefits STARs and employers gain from validating skills.

Benefits STARs Gain From Validating Skills



Value Propositions for STARs

Skills validation provides both tangible and intangible benefits for STARs, empowering them in multiple ways. Here are five key ways STARs gain value from skills validation:

1. Deeper Insights Into Skills

Skills validation leads to a clear understanding of skills and growth areas for STARs.

2. Strengthened Self-Perception

Validating skills builds confidence and self-assurance, enabling STARs to overcome self-doubt.

3. Improved Ability to Communicate Skills

STARs reported that skills validation enhances their ability to articulate their skills.

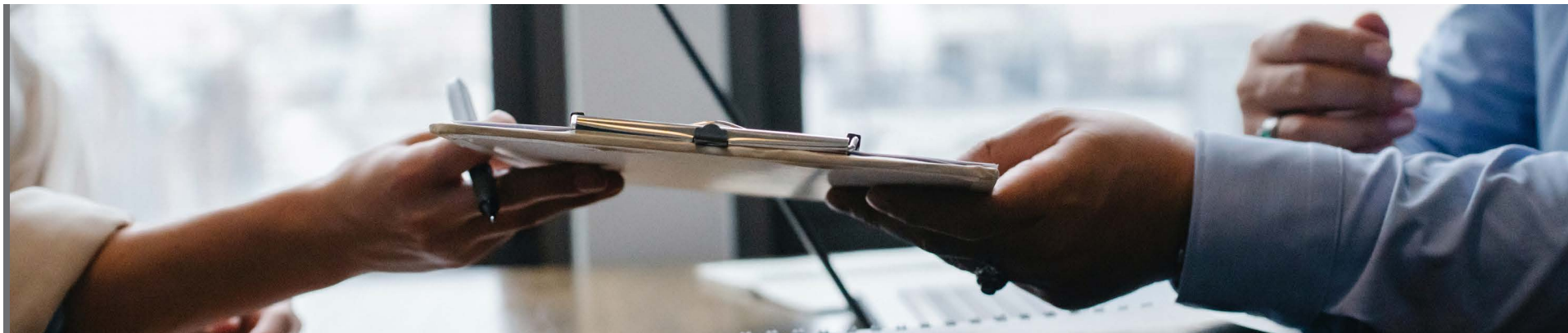
4. Enhanced Visibility in the Marketplace

Skills validation enhances STARs' visibility, strengthens their professional reputations, and increases their industry credibility.

5. Better Career Outcomes

Skills validation bridges gaps by demonstrating STARs' expertise, driving better career outcomes.

Value Propositions for STARs



1. Enhanced Visibility

Skills validation plays a role in making STARs and their skills more visible, strengthening their professional reputations, and increasing their recognition and credibility within an industry or network.

“I find myself validating skills with the intent and, kind of the gained value of becoming a subject matter expert, like a trusted adviser about that topic. So I think a lot of that really leads to more visibility and really better outcomes, but again, you know, gaining that trust.”

— XCredit STARs Design Panel Participant

“I started recognizing that some of the things that really separate people were the soft skills...And so having those validations of my soft skills, I thought that would be an excellent thing to add to my resume.”

— Bryan Vela, XCredit Pilot Participant

62% of surveyed respondents identified enhanced visibility as a key benefit of skills validation. This visibility translates into:

- + Tangible proof of competency to present to employers or clients
- + Greater credibility and trust within the industry
- + Increased access to networking opportunities and professional recognition

By showcasing validated skills, STARs can position themselves as experts, gaining recognition for their expertise in new and impactful ways.

Value Propositions for STARs

2. Better Career Outcomes

The absence of formal credentials can create several barriers for STARs, even when they demonstrate expertise.

“I once had a situation where I was advocating for a raise... I found out that this individual who just started was making a lot more than I was. I thought, okay, great for that individual, but I felt like I deserved a raise. So I went and asked for one. I gave them all the reasons: I had the skills, I was being fully transparent, and I was still training this individual. I was actually helping get their job done, so I was doing like three jobs in one, basically. I explained why I felt like I deserved a raise, having been there for years. The response I received was, ‘Well, yeah, that’s great to hear and I get it, but you don’t have your degree. This person has a master’s or is working on their master’s. Hence, you’re not going to get that raise because your skills are good, but they’re not valid because you don’t have the degree.’”

— Interview with Gaby Martinez Chio, STAR and Associate Education Designer at Education Design Lab

Skills validation can help bridge this gap by building trust in a STAR’s expertise. **57% of surveyed respondents saw significant potential for better career outcomes through skills validation, including:**

- + Access to more career opportunities and/or advancements
- + Increased opportunities for promotions or salary raises

3. Strengthened Ability to Communicate Skills

While STARs bring valuable expertise from life and work experiences, many struggle to effectively communicate their skills to employers. 54% of surveyed STARs reported that skills validation enhances their ability to articulate their skills.

This is particularly evident among XCredit participants, who report greater confidence in expressing their skills after validation through the Lab’s program. For Akachi Emeghara, the combination of skills validation and learning—through both XCredit and OneTen courses—helped reinforce his abilities and improve how he communicates them.

“[The course] will help me improve on the things that I have, and then be able to communicate those things a little bit better.”

— Akachi Emeghara, XCredit Pilot Participant

By validating their skills, STARs not only demonstrate their expertise but also strengthen their ability to communicate it.

You can read more about these STARs and their [experiences with XCredit here](#) 

Value Propositions for STARs

4. Improved Self-Perception and Confidence

STARs often face doubt, lack confidence and feel excluded in professional settings, particularly in industries where traditional degrees are often the default benchmark.

“I’ve had to validate my skills in...everyday conversations with coworkers... because I don’t have that college degree. Sometimes people will talk about their fraternities and sororities and what they learned in college, and because I didn’t go to college, again, I have to ... validate where I learned [my skills], how I got there, all without a college degree. That’s one area that I see myself having to constantly kind of just validate myself.”

— Interview with Gaby Martinez Chio, STAR and Associate Education Designer at Education Design Lab

For Emilee Rolleg, another XCredit participant, imposter syndrome made her question whether her achievements were based on skill or mere luck. Validating her abilities through XCredit provided tangible proof of her expertise, reinforcing her confidence as she navigated the job search.

“I definitely think that helped me have more confidence in myself and my skills going into the interview... knowing that I do have legitimacy in these skills.”

— Emilee Rolleg, XCredit Pilot Participant

Skills validation plays a critical role in reshaping how STARs perceive their own capabilities—53% of surveyed STARs reported an improved sense of self-worth. By providing concrete evidence of their skills, validation helps shift the narrative from self-doubt to confidence.

5. Deeper Insight into Skills

For many STARs, simply recognizing and defining their skills is the first step toward confidence, effective communication, and greater visibility in the workforce. 52% of surveyed STARs reported that validation gave them deeper insight into their skills, including:

- + A clearer understanding of their strengths
- + A clearer roadmap for growth

Validating skills allows STARs to articulate, measure, and contextualize their experiences in ways that align with industry expectations.




Actionable Insights

To fully realize the benefits of skills validation for STARs, the ecosystem must evolve to provide structured, scalable, and widely accepted validation mechanisms. The following insights outline key strategies for strengthening the impact and value of skills validation:

1. Credential Skills Gained From All Kinds of Experiences

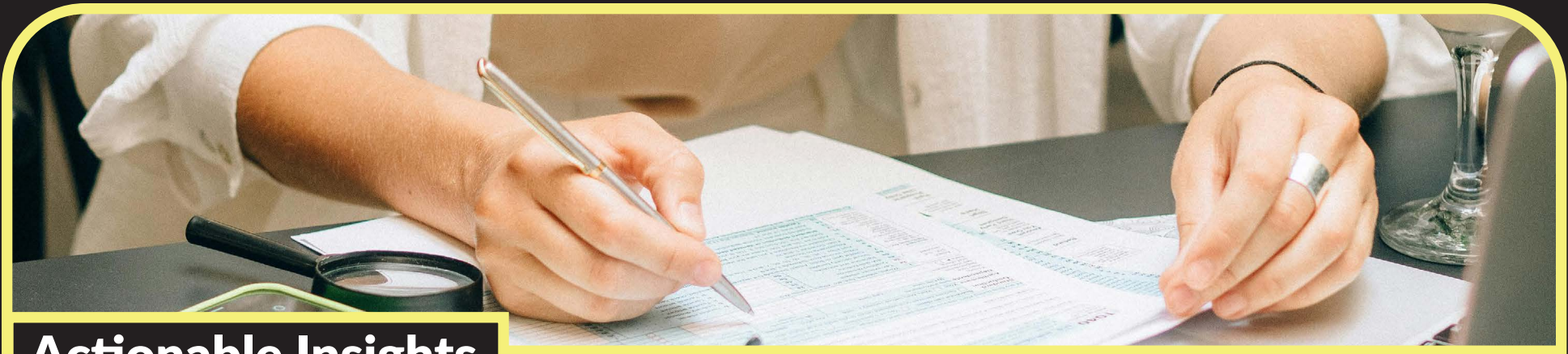
To truly empower STARs, we must formally recognize their skills, through strategies such as:

- + Develop **diverse methods**  to formally recognize and validate skills gained through varied work and life experience.
- + Establish industry-wide standards for skills validation that employers and institutions can adopt.
- + Build partnerships between employers and skills validation providers to create recognized credentials for in-demand skills.

2. Provide Well-rounded Support

Supporting STARs' career growth requires more than just skills validation—it involves equipping them with the right tools, guidance, and communication strategies. Try this:

- + Create tools and resources that enable STARs to effectively communicate their skills to employers.
- + Develop standardized language and frameworks for describing skills across industries.
- + Establish mentorship programs that connect STARs with industry professionals who can help them navigate career advancement.



Actionable Insights

3. Continue Research and Evidence Building

Research is vital to understand and improve skills validation approaches. This includes efforts such as:

- + Conduct longitudinal studies on the impact of skills validation on STARS' career trajectories, as well as on their confidence and self-esteem.
- + Study the effectiveness of different validation methods and their outcomes.

4. Create Infrastructure for Skills Recognition

We need to develop the technological infrastructure to support skill validation and make credentials transferable across employers and industries. This can be accomplished by:

- + Develop technology platforms that can validate and track validated skills.
- + Build systems for portable credentials that can be recognized across employers.
- + Establish quality control measures for skills validation programs.

5. Ensure Credentials Provide Real Value

Credentials must be designed with a clear connection to career opportunities, ensuring they hold real value in the job market, through strategies such as:

- + Design validation systems that directly connect to employment opportunities.
- + Create credentials that have clear market value and recognition.
- + Develop metrics to measure the impact of skills validation on career outcomes.
- + Establish feedback loops between employers and credentialing organizations to ensure alignment with industry needs.



Value Propositions for Employers

Benefits Employers Gain From Validating Skills



Value Propositions for Employers

For employers, skills validation offers value throughout the entire employment lifecycle, from hiring to retention. Here are six key ways employers benefit from skills validation:

1. Talent Acquisition

Skills validation helps employers hire the right talent.

2. Fostering Inclusivity and Workforce Diversity

Skills validation is a powerful tool for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion by expanding opportunity to underrepresented talent.

3. Strengthening Employer Brand and Workforce Trust

By prioritizing verified competencies, employers position themselves as skills-first organizations.

4. Minimizing Resume Discrepancies

Skills validation can be a valuable tool to reduce doubts about resume accuracy.

5. Targeted Learning & Development

Surveyed employers believe in skills validation as a means to inform learning and development.

6. Streamlining Promotion and Internal Mobility Decisions

Employers recognize skills validation's role in informing promotion decisions.

Value Propositions for Employers

1. Talent Acquisition

76% of surveyed employers identified acquiring the right talent as a key benefit of skills validation.

Talent acquisition is a widespread organizational challenge, faced by multiple industries. [A ManpowerGroup study](#) found that 80% of employers globally struggle to find skilled talent. Additionally, [research from SHRM](#) estimates that hiring a new employee can cost three to four times the position's salary.

With such high stakes, validating skills before hiring helps organizations ensure they are selecting candidates with the right competencies—reducing costs, minimizing hiring risks, and improving workforce quality.

2. Fostering Inclusivity and Workforce Diversity

Skills validation is a powerful tool for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion.

- + 56% of surveyed employers see it as a way to promote inclusivity.
- + 42% recognize its role in diversifying the workforce.
- + 36% see it as a tool to mitigate bias and ensure fair hiring practices.

By shifting the focus from degrees to demonstrable skills, employers can broaden access to opportunities for underrepresented talent and make hiring decisions based on ability rather than credentials. This aligns with Deloitte's findings, where 53% of business and HR executives cited improving DEI* as a key objective of skills-based practices—enabling fairer hiring, recognizing individuals for their full range of skills, and reducing reliance on job experience alone.

Additionally, automated means of skills validation have the potential to further reduce bias by minimizing subjective grading and guesswork, ensuring a more objective and equitable hiring process.

***Note:** As the DEI landscape continues to evolve, we remain steadfast in centering those most impacted by the degree-first system. We are committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through our research, implementations, and recommendations. Our team is actively monitoring these shifts and is dedicated to ensuring that skills validation remains a central tool in driving meaningful progress toward these goals.

3. Strengthening Employer Brand and Workforce Trust

As skills-based hiring gains momentum, 53% of surveyed employers recognize the power of skills validation in highlighting practical, demonstrable skills, while 44% view it as crucial to staying aligned with industry shifts. By prioritizing verified competencies, employers position themselves as skills-first organizations—attracting top talent, including STARS (Skilled Through Alternative Routes) who may not have degrees but possess vital workplace skills.

Moreover, adopting a transparent, skills-based approach fosters trust between employers and employees. When workers see that decisions about promotions and hiring are rooted in validated skills rather than subjective factors, they feel recognized, engaged, and more likely to invest in their long-term career growth within the organization.

Value Propositions for Employers

4. Minimizing Resume Discrepancies

Employers increasingly seek ways to verify candidates' skills, with 50% of surveyed employers viewing skills validation as a tool to reduce doubts about resume accuracy.

Resume falsification is a widespread issue. A [study by Standout CV](#) found that 64.2% of surveyed job seekers admitted to lying on their resume at least once. As Andrew Fennell, former recruiter and director at Standout CV, [noted in a media release](#) :

“More people are looking to lie on their resume in 2024 to get that competitive edge in an increasingly volatile and challenging job market.”

— Andrew Fennell, Standout CV

This challenge is further amplified by the rise of AI tools that generate polished but potentially misleading resumes and cover letters. Skills validation helps mitigate this risk by providing verifiable proof of an individual's competencies, ensuring a more trustworthy hiring process.

5. Targeted Learning & Development

47% of surveyed employers believe in skills validation as a means to inform learning and development, with nearly 38% specifically viewing it as a way to identify and reduce skill gaps.

By validating skills, organizations gain clear insights into workforce capabilities, enabling targeted training rather than broad, one-size-fits-all programs.

As industries undergo rapid technological change, skills validation ensures employees stay prepared for evolving roles—future-proofing the workforce and strengthening business agility.

6. Streamlining Promotion and Internal Mobility Decisions

44% of surveyed employers recognize skills validation's role in informing promotion decisions.

“If you're going to be making decisions about people as sensitive as promotions, pay, or deployment to work based on skills, then that skills data needs to be verified and valid. Many organizations continue to rely on workers self-reporting their skills and proficiency levels, in comparison with more valid ways of confirming skills.”

— Deloitte, [The skills-based organization: A new operating model for work and the workforce](#)

According to a 2022 [LinkedIn Global Talent Trends Report](#), internal talent mobility is 2.5 times more cost-effective than external hiring. By leveraging skills validation, employers can create a data-driven foundation for promotions, ensuring that advancement opportunities are fair, transparent, and based on merit.



Actionable Insights

For employers, skills validation provides a powerful tool for strengthening talent recruitment, enhancing workforce development, and fostering internal mobility. To fully unlock the potential of skills validation, it's essential to establish clear frameworks, ensure alignment with industry needs, and continuously assess its impact. The following insights offer key strategies for maximizing the value of skills validation for employers:

1. Build Trust Through Rigorous Validation Standards

Robust, transparent validation mechanisms must be built to increase employer trust and confidence in skills validation. Try this:

- + Develop widely accepted frameworks for validating skills.
- + Provide clear data on how skills were assessed, demonstrated, and validated.
- + Ensure employers can seamlessly verify and interpret validated skills.

2. Align Skills Validation with Industry Needs

Stakeholders must collaborate with employers to ensure that validated skills align with real-world job requirements. This includes:

- + **Industry Partnerships:** Engage employers in co-designing skills validation frameworks.
- + **Regular Updates:** Keep skills taxonomies and assessment methods aligned with evolving industry trends.
- + **Workforce Analytics:** Use labor market data to map skills validation to in-demand roles.



Actionable Insights

3. Measure and Optimize Impact

To ensure the effectiveness of skills validation, it's essential to continuously measure its impact and refine strategies for maximum value.

Try this:

- + Measure how skills validation improves hiring, retention, and promotions.
- + Conduct pilot programs to create low-risk environments of learning and iteration.
- + Share case studies and employer testimonials demonstrating ROI.

4. Accelerate Industry Transformation

Governments and policymakers play a pivotal role in fostering an ecosystem that supports skills validation across industries. Their involvement can drive systemic change through the following actions:

- + **Standardize Skill Definitions:** Establish clear, consistent definitions of skills across various industries to ensure universal recognition and application.
- + **Fund Validation Infrastructure:** Invest in the development of platforms and tools that support scalable, secure, and efficient skills assessment and validation.
- + **Champion Skills-Based Hiring:** Promote policies that encourage employers to shift toward skills-based hiring practices, reducing reliance on traditional credentials.
- + **Acknowledge Skills Credentials:** Develop policies that recognize the value of micro-credentials and skills-based certifications, creating a more inclusive and accessible talent pipeline.



Conclusion

Skills validation offers a transformative opportunity to address critical gaps in today's workforce ecosystem.

For STARs, skills validation goes beyond certification, offering improved visibility, better career outcomes, strengthened communication, increased confidence, and deeper insight into their capabilities. These benefits lay the groundwork for meaningful career advancement and economic mobility.

For employers, skills validation offers strategic advantages: improved talent acquisition, enhanced diversity and inclusion, reduced resume fraud, informed learning and development decisions, and streamlined internal mobility. These benefits address key challenges in talent management and promote a more equitable and efficient workplace.

To fully realize the potential of skills validation, coordinated action across the ecosystem is essential. Key priorities include:

- + **Developing standardized, industry-recognized validation frameworks that build trust and ensure portability of credentials**
- + **Creating technological infrastructure to support scalable, accessible validation processes**
- + **Establishing clear metrics to measure impact and demonstrate ROI for all stakeholders**
- + **Fostering collaboration between employers, education providers, and policymakers to align validation standards with workforce needs**
- + **Ensuring equitable, accessible validation processes that meet both STARs' and employers' needs**

Moving forward, skills validation has the potential to reshape how we recognize, develop, and match talent with opportunity. By continuing to research, iterate, and improve validation methods while prioritizing equity and accessibility, we can create a more inclusive, efficient, and dynamic labor market.

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About Philanthropy at Walmart

Walmart.org represents the philanthropic efforts of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation. By focusing where the business has unique strengths, Walmart.org works to tackle key social and environmental issues and collaborate with others to spark long-lasting systemic change. Walmart has stores in 19 countries, employs more than 2.1 million associates and does business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people. Walmart.org is helping people live better by supporting programs to accelerate upward job mobility for frontline workers, address hunger, build inclusive economic opportunity for people in supply chains, protect and restore nature, reduce waste and emissions and build strong communities where Walmart operates. To learn more, visit www.walmart.org or connect on Twitter @Walmartorg.

Contributors

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