

PROJECT SUMMARY

Overview:

The IT Skill Standards 2020 and Beyond project proposes to create a set of employer-led and verified Information Technology (IT) skill standards for high-demand job clusters. Skill standards provide a blueprint of how work is organized in high-performance workplaces and the responsibilities of workers in the success of the enterprise. Educators use skill standards to create curriculum that is relevant, current and better prepares students for work. Employers use skill standards to improve their communications about job openings at their companies and to improve their internal training and development.

The skill standards make IT careers more accessible because they provide transparency regarding the knowledge, skills and performance needed for success in the job market. The IT skill standards will be used to meet the needs of the current workforce with a goal to improve competitiveness of companies nationally.

The project is built on 2003 work done by the Northwest Center for Emerging Technologies (NSF ATE National Center) at Bellevue College to create the National IT Skill Standards. The job clusters appropriate then are no longer the most critical, and at least four of the proposed clusters did not exist in 2003. The lack of standards for the new clusters and obsolete standards for those clusters still relevant creates issues for educators nationally who operate using legacy information, guesswork or no information at all in preparing their graduates for employer demands.

Intellectual Merit:

The project will create a contemporary, future-facing set of IT Skill Standards for the most critical IT job clusters, led by employer subject matter experts nationally. In addition to creating a set of skill standards for each job cluster, the standards within job cluster will be stratified by the top 4-8 critical work functions involved and will also provide a list of the certifications valued by employers as of publish date. Further, a national group of educators and BILT members per cluster will determine which portions of the standards apply to 2-year and 4-year programs to facilitate ease of use in development of employer-aligned curriculum. These stratifications will assist both employers and educators to more easily apply the standards. Also, the skill standards will be forward-looking in that subject matter experts will be asked to predict trends in IT and thus the knowledge and skills that are likely to emerge up in the future.

Broader Impacts:

Educators will use the standards for curriculum design. Employers will use the standards to influence and better understand the knowledge and skills that graduates from programs aligned with the new standards will possess and to create transparent job descriptions. The updated skill standards development process, which uses virtual communication combined with face-to-face meetings with employers and educators, will also be disseminated to employers and educators in other disciplines as a model for developing standards using a mix of face-to-face and virtual platforms.

To reach IT programs nationally, the main dissemination website will be on ATE Central and will be linked to the CTC website for details. Dissemination will feature multiple strategies to make stakeholders aware of the skill standards, the tools for utilization and their applications. Dissemination will include conferences and live/recorded webinars on how to apply the skills standards. Permanent resources will be available via ATE Central and through other websites used by employers and educators.

In addition to broad dissemination to educators and employers nationally, the project will further greater inclusion of underserved populations in aligned programs nationally through a dedicated focus to actively disseminate and assist with application of the standards within Historically Black Colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and colleges committed to active veteran programs such as Collin College and Lake Washington Institute of Technology.