



Future Skills Centre

Centre des **Compétences futures**

Project Insights Report

eCampusOntario Microcredentials: Getting People Into Programs and Into Jobs



PARTNERS

eCampusOntario



LOCATIONS

Ontario



INVESTMENT

\$267,660



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Executive Summary

Launched in 2021, eCampusOntario’s microcredential portal addresses skills mismatches in the labour market by offering short, industry-relevant learning programs. It has attracted over 40,000 unique users.

The program targets skill gaps in key sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, providing flexible and accessible education options supported by financial assistance through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). This initiative, which reflects a shift toward microcredentials in education, is aimed at workforce development by aligning educational offerings with market demand.

With funding from the Future Skills Centre and data from the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC), eCampusOntario was able to tag many of its courses with the skills they were intended to develop, and then map those courses to occupations to which they were best suited. The eCampusOntario portal was subsequently improved to allow users to enter a job title and receive customized program recommendations, as well as labour market information about the role provided.

The portal improvements led to better program recommendations, increased user engagement, and enhanced inclusivity and accessibility. After implementation, the portal also experienced an increase in program referrals to post-secondary institutions and an increase in click-through rates.

KEY INSIGHTS

1

In the first four months that the new portal was active, eCampusOntario experienced a 32% increase in the number of inquiries it provided to PSIs, and a 4% increase in click throughs to PSIs.

2

The mapping of in-demand skills onto specific courses increased understanding of which skills are developed by which programs allowing for more targeted interventions to address skill shortages.

3

The program demonstrates potential for expansion into additional sectors within Ontario, suggesting the importance of maintaining strong partnerships and ongoing collaboration between funders and the eCampus Ontario team for sustainability and project expansion.

▶ The Issue

eCampus Ontario, a provincially funded not-for-profit organization, is leading the advancement of online learning at Ontario's 53 public post-secondary institutions through cutting-edge innovation and technology. In 2021, it launched a microcredential portal designed to provide short, customizable training programs to meet evolving labour market demands for skills upgrading and reskilling. Specifically targeting skills gaps in key sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, the portal offers flexible and accessible training pathways, complemented by financial support from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

The eCampus Ontario project focused on enhancing its microcredential portal to better address labour market needs through targeted education programs. To increase its impact, the initiative integrated critical labour market data to improve program recommendations, addressing user engagement challenges, and strengthening inclusivity and accessibility measures.



🔧 What We Investigated

The initiative, part of Ontario's strategy to facilitate upskilling and reskilling, involved integrating standardized occupation and skills data along with labour market information, particularly in the manufacturing, healthcare, social assistance, and information and communication industries. With the goal of improving personalized program recommendations based on users' job titles, the project sought to address the knowledge gap identified in user behaviour — extensive browsing with little follow-through to post-secondary institutions.

Utilizing consultations with industry partners, occupational data from [OpportuNext](#), and collaboration with post-secondary institutions for program tagging, the project leveraged eCampus Ontario's core values of inclusion, creativity, and experimentation. The approach was designed to improve the portal's usability, encouraging more informed decision-making by users and better align educational offerings with labour market needs.

This strategic expansion was designed not only to increase traffic to post-secondary websites, but also to contribute to the long-term goal of meeting employers' needs for a skilled workforce.

What We're Learning

Strong evidence demonstrates the importance of labour market information (LMI) in making informed decisions about career planning and developing skills. The delivery of this information is paramount, ensuring that it is provided in a timely manner, in an appropriate format, and accessible through the appropriate platform.

The eCampus Ontario platform leveraged LMI data from Opportunext, including five-year job outlooks, salary information, and job-title mapping, to identify critical connections between skills, occupations, and microcredential programs. This enabled the platform to provide personalized microcredential recommendations to users, effectively targeting and addressing specific skills gaps while minimizing time and cost.

After deploying the updated portal and integrating the metadata enhancements, the platform saw a significant increase in user engagement. Specifically, since the launch of the updated portal on September 5, 2023, more than 7,593 individuals have accessed personalized job recommendations, a 32% increase in inquiries to post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and a 4% year-over-year increase in click-through rates to PSIs. These metrics underscore the increased utility and effectiveness of the platform in directing users to relevant microcredential programs.

In addition, end-user feedback provided critical insights into user preferences and behaviours. Users visited the platform primarily to explore microcredential programs that aligned with their career aspirations and prior experience. Recommendations generated by the platform resonated positively with users, indicating its effectiveness in helping users understand and pursue appropriate microcredential pathways.

In addition to platform improvements, raising awareness of microcredential programs is critical to their success and requires efforts to engage stakeholders such as employers, industry associations, educational institutions, and potential users. This can be accomplished through a variety of channels including targeted marketing campaigns, hosting events at educational institutions, and conducting interactive webinars to showcase the benefits and opportunities of microcredentials.

Finally, one of the key takeaways from this project is the potential of microcredentials to address skills mismatches in the labour market. By bridging the gap between industry demand and individual skill sets, microcredential programs are a promising solution to facilitate career advancement and lifelong learning opportunities, with limited time and cost commitment.

★ Why It Matters

This initiative to match microcredentials to skills based on the Conference Board of Canada's OpportuNext matching algorithm, is part of Ontario's microcredential strategy. This will provide users with more targeted and relevant recommendations.

The portal has attracted more than 40,000 users and provides information on affordable, industry-relevant programs. In addition to facilitating learning flexibility, the portal supports financial access through the Ontario Student Assistance Programs (OSAP), enabling individuals to access loans and grants for approved programs. These efforts are supported by funding for 65 projects to develop up to 250 new microcredential programs to address skills gaps in the workforce.

As the first of its kind in Ontario, the portal's success has inspired similar developments in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, highlighting the national and global trend towards valuing microcredentials for workforce development. This approach underscores the importance of adaptive training models to meet the evolving needs of employers and learners and emphasizes continuous evaluation and adaptation to optimize digital learning ecosystems across Canada.

▶ What's Next

Improving inclusivity and accessibility emerged as a priority, with steps including expanding program offerings, refining the user experience through ongoing testing, and incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations into the design and delivery processes of the portal.

In addition, efforts to raise awareness among stakeholders, including employers, industry associations, and educational institutions, are essential. Targeted marketing campaigns, interactive webinars, and educational events can foster greater stakeholder engagement and support for microcredentials.

Finally, the metadata mapping technology used by the eCampusOntario microcredential portal is scalable and portable, offering potential benefits to other Canadian and international jurisdictions. This scalability ensures broader access and use of the enhanced portal, increasing its impact and reach in facilitating lifelong learning opportunities and meeting evolving skills needs.



State of Skills: Quality of Work

As Canada navigates continuing labour shortages in critical areas of the economy, policymakers and employers are looking for more effective approaches to recruit and retain workers

[Read Thematic Report](#)

ecampusOntario continues to offer microcredentials via its [online portal](#).

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

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