

# How to Build Digital-First Workforce Development Programs at Scale



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# Introduction

## Workforce Development in the Future of Work

The world of work is changing. There is a [widening gap](#) between the skills that people have and those that are needed for in-demand jobs.<sup>1</sup> This gap is being driven by [automation](#)<sup>2</sup> and artificial intelligence (AI) tools, like ChatGPT and other generative AI, that are increasing workplace productivity by automating many creative processes.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there is increasing interest and growing positive sentiment about [skills-based learning and hiring](#), particularly around how micro-credentials can supplement degrees to help learners develop in-demand skills and better stand out to employers with open roles.<sup>4</sup>

Workforce development programs are responding to these challenges in both government and the private sector. These long-standing challenges are taking on additional urgency as [technology widens](#) skill, income, and wealth gaps around the world.<sup>5</sup> Leaders in different geographies and institutions are quickly seeking to upskill or reskill constituents to maintain a competitive edge in our increasingly globalized labor markets where work from anywhere, even across country borders, is increasingly the norm.

Workforce development programs represent a massive area of investment for governments, especially since the start of COVID. In 2020, according to the [OECD](#),<sup>6</sup> the wealthiest 34 countries

collectively spent \$1.3 trillion on labor markets, \$57 billion of which went to training alone. This investment is increasing as the challenge of matching job seekers to open roles grows, in-demand skills change more rapidly, and gaps across socio-economic classes widen.

There needs to be a way to ramp up workforce development programs at scale, while also driving down costs, to make these efforts sustainable. We see great promise in digital-first workforce development programs to meet these needs now and in the future.

At Coursera, we partner with workforce development leaders in more than 100 countries who are developing and implementing digital-first workforce development programs at scale. We also partner with more than 3,500 businesses and 3,000 higher education institutions. This guide draws upon our experience partnering with pioneering organizations and practitioners, and introduces key best practices for launching a successful digital-first workforce development program.

Common challenges<sup>8</sup>—such as limited internet connectivity, cultural differences, or even care-giver responsibilities—can disproportionately impact [certain populations' access](#) to the workforce,<sup>9</sup> and impede workforce development efforts. If left unaddressed, these challenges can break momentum for innovative workforce development programming that has the potential to change lives quickly and positively. **By working within this practitioner-based framework of best practices, you can take the lead on your own programming, and better position your organization and people for success.**

## Defining Digital-first Workforce Development Programs

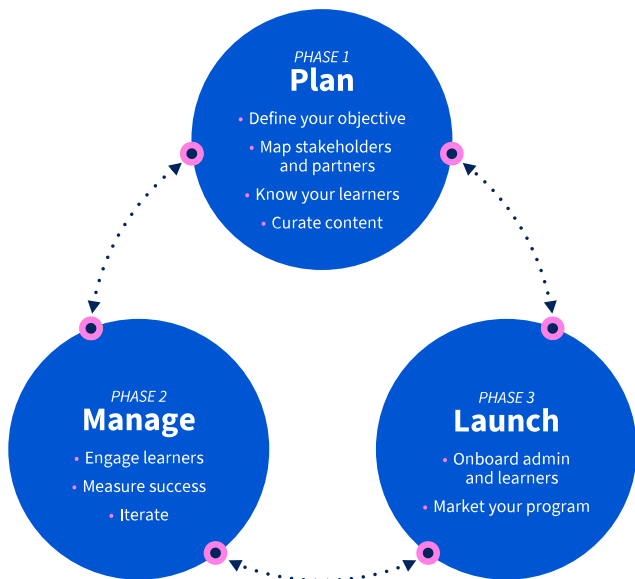
As a result of evolutions in technology accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce development organizations are increasingly leveraging digital learning to provide access to training programs at scale in place of or in tandem with in-person training and/or wrap-around services. For example:

At the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the Ukraine Ministry of Education and Science offered universities in Ukraine free access to over 5,300 online courses from leading institutions and brands, including Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, AWS and Microsoft. Since its launch, over 30,000 students from 260 Ukrainian academic institutions have spent more than 315,000 hours learning job-relevant skills online. At the same time, to connect Ukrainian talent with job opportunities, the World Economic Forum established the Refugee Employment and Employability Initiative. This convened CHROs from leading multinational employers to create a foundation for [system-wide global support from employers to refugees](#).<sup>7</sup>

## The Plan, Launch, Manage Framework




Our framework to successfully execute digital-first workforce development programs has three main phases: **Plan, Launch, and Manage**. These phases are sequential, but also iterative, as lessons learned during the Manage phase are fed back into improvements in program design and implementation throughout the life of the program.

Throughout this guide, we highlight examples of best practices that our partners have used when planning and implementing their own programs. We're excited to share them with you as you move your agency's workforce development efforts forward!



## Project Management Resources

If you are looking to upskill your project management expertise while working with digital-first workforce development programming, we recommend the following content:

-  [Foundations of Project Management](#) by Google  
⌚ Approx. 18 hours to complete
-  [Project Management Principles and Practices Specialization](#)  
by the University of California at Irvine  
⌚ Approx. 5 months to complete
-  [Professional Certificate: Project Management](#) by Google  
⌚ Approx. 6 months to complete

# Plan

## Overview

Planning is widely considered to be the most important part of project management. Planning builds a shared vision for the project's goals, while providing detail about how those goals will be reached. The result is a common language that everyone understands and uses to collaborate successfully.

A successful digital-first workforce development project must be properly planned on a variety of levels—particularly for stakeholders and learners, while keeping content relevancy top of mind. Proper planning allows you and your team to create a well-resourced environment that clearly understands the program's users and plans to solve for the challenges they might face.

A good practice is to ensure that you have worked through all the key planning stages thoughtfully and intentionally—while acknowledging that iteration and adjustment will happen throughout the life of the program as you learn from implementation. This is true of digital-first programs, as well as more traditional face-to-face training. However, workforce development programs that employ digital content and platforms have a special set of planning considerations.

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**When we help one person achieve career goals and financial independence, we make the future better for generations.**

**Akbar Hussain**  
Head of Marketing and Communications,  
Punjab Skills Development Fund<sup>11</sup>

## Define your Objective

Start with articulating the change you wish to make with your learning program. What difference is your digital-first workforce development program trying to make for the program's target learners? What is your theory of change? What actions need to be taken for this change to occur and how will you measure them? For example, online learning or training may be one of many actions needed to support employment outcomes. Consider how online learning or training may contribute to this "chain" of actions and outcomes. Based on your **theory of change**, you will also need to develop a logic model to dig deeper into program elements while you plan.

Program success can mean many things. The important thing is to always **define success** within the context of your program and **establish a baseline** for the current state of the work, before your program starts. Improving job outcomes are often the top measure of success, but it can be difficult to link training directly with job results, especially when they are self-reported. Our partners cite program or course completion as additional key metrics. Knowing what these metrics are will help you in two ways: First, to continuously improve your program. Second, to articulate and demonstrate progress and success to learners, funders, or other key stakeholders.

Your metrics of success should be clear at this early stage in your program planning to help justify the investment of your program to stakeholders (which may include the general public if you are a publicly funded organization). Putting your metrics into action comes later, which we will cover in more depth in the [Manage section](#) of this guide.




## What's the difference? Theories of change and logic models

Theories of change and logic models are [related but different](#) ways to show your project planning.<sup>12</sup>

A theory of change demonstrates the why of your project. It shows the conceptual framework that underpins why you think your project will be successful.

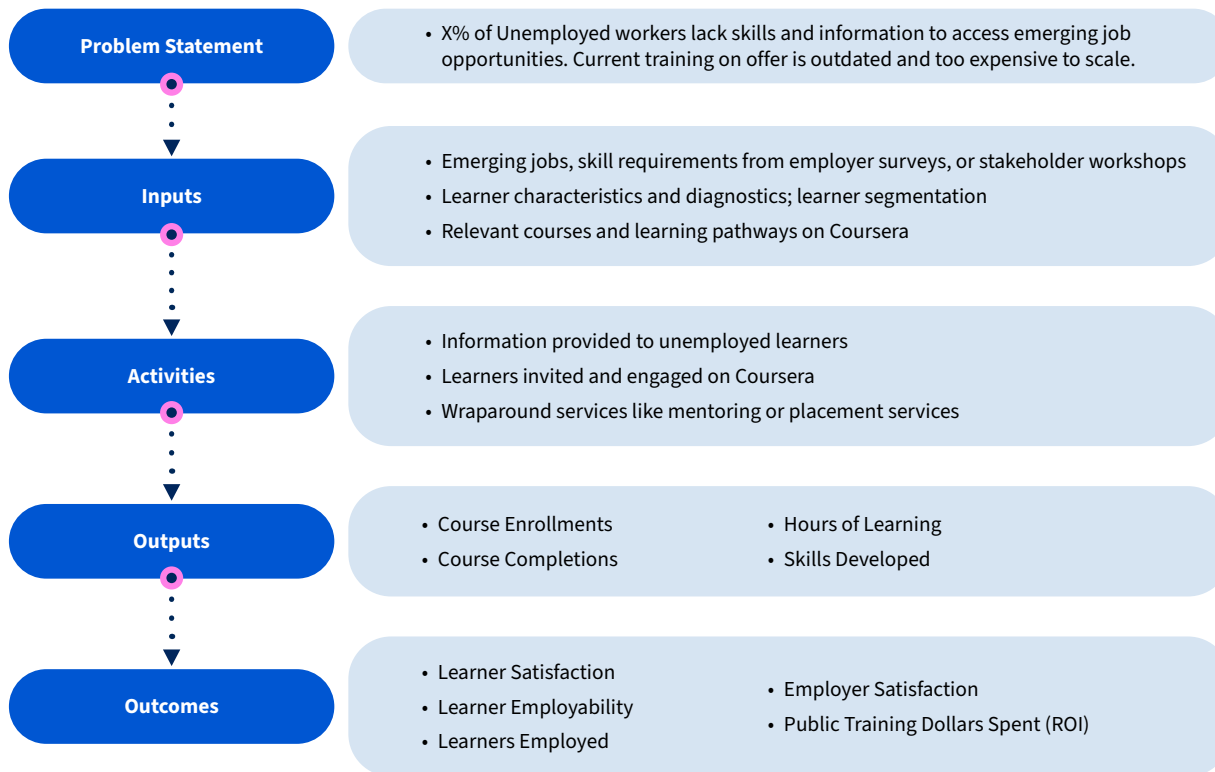
A logic model gives insight into the how. Someone reading your program's logic model should understand the steps your program is taking to achieve its impact.

Coursera has resources available that can help you quickly learn more about theories of change, logic models and how they relate to monitoring and evaluation.

-  **Logic Models:** Clip from Evaluation of Digital Health Interventions by Imperial College of London  
⌚ Approx. 7 minutes to complete
-  **Building a Logic Model:** Clip from Social Impact Strategy: Tools for Entrepreneurs and Innovators by University of Pennsylvania  
⌚ Approx. 10 minutes to complete
-  **How to Create an Evaluation Strategy for your Non-Profit:** Guided Project from the The Coursera Project Network  
⌚ Approx. 1.5 hours to complete

## Logic Model Visual Mockup

This is an example of a logic model. Some of the specific outputs and outcomes, such as course enrollments, and hours of learning, will be addressed in more detail in the [Measuring Success section](#) of this guide.



## Map Stakeholders and Partners

To understand the broader ecosystem in which your program is operating, you will want to map stakeholders and partners. **Stakeholders** and partners are related to each other, but different. Stakeholders (for example, other social sector agencies in your community) are generally part of the ecosystem where your program will take place. They may have an interest in or benefit from your program's success but are not necessarily involved with its implementation. **Partners** (for example, a company that has agreed to employ graduates of your program) directly support your program and may benefit from its outcome in some additional way.

Stakeholders can become partners, and vice versa, over the course of your program. You should understand who is a partner and who is a stakeholder at any point of your program, and manage these relationships appropriately. You can use joint workshops to gather the needs of each stakeholder or partner group, as well as obtain the buy-in that will be critical to the program rollout.

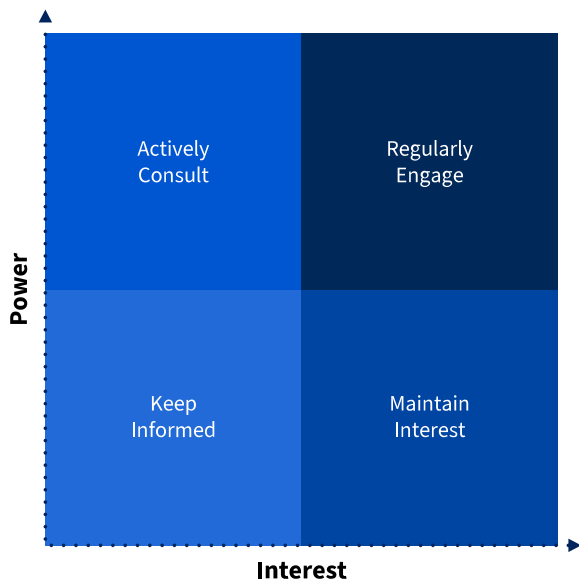
## 6 Questions to Consider When Mapping Stakeholders

When you are beginning to map your stakeholders, it is important to answer questions like:

1. Which agencies and private sector associations are key to get buy-in from?
2. Which jobs will the private sector need to fill now, and in the near future? Invite industry associations, chambers of commerce, and businesses to get input for this project. Set regular meetings with them (and ensure these checkpoints happen throughout the lifetime of the program).
3. Which are the most in-demand skills currently in the labor market?
4. Which jobs and career pathways will be most in-demand in the next five years?
5. How might this program fit into, or advance, national or regional labor market priorities or competitiveness strategies?

## How to Organize Stakeholder Input

As you are engaging in mapping conversations, it will become clear which stakeholders are more interested in your program, and which stakeholders have significant power in determining program success. Keeping track of these insights gives a better idea of how to engage with each potential partner. You can use the matrix below to organize these strategies.



## How to Engage with 3 Types of Partners

Here are some ideas for how to engage with different types of partners, as you plan and develop your digital-first workforce development program.

- 1. Program and Technology partners to manage different elements of your programming and technical infrastructure setup** (for example, different government agencies, connectivity or device providers, or community-based organizations).
  - Confirm program management teams and content with each program partner.
  - Organize training, content review and orientation, and confirm key performance indicators (KPIs) needed by partners.
  - Ensure coordination on marketing and outreach with each program partner to effectively reach their learners.
- 2. Outreach partners to identify marketing channels needed to reach each target learner audience.**
  - Define the sequence or steps of outreach based on priorities among learner groups.
  - For learners targeted for launch, start engaging with communications and marketing teams pre-launch.
  - Work with marketing and outreach partners to commit to an agreed cadence of communications and media campaigns to their target audience.
- 3. Wraparound service partners to provide support services for each learner segment.**
  - Determine which services are most important for your program. For example: career prep, learner support, job placement, financial coaching, mental health counseling, and childcare could all help learners succeed.
  - Confirm partners for key services that begin at launch. For later services, confirm core team members to lead on partnerships.
  - Establish feedback processes to improve future iterations.

## Stakeholder Management in Action: CINDE

CINDE<sup>13</sup>, the Costa Rican Investment Promotion Agency, has helped attract leading global businesses to Costa Rica for over 40 years. CINDE has been vital to the country's success in attracting investments from multinational corporations that create jobs. Over the last five years, 9 out of every 10 jobs in the country were created by CINDE partner companies. Amidst the pandemic, employment in these companies grew 12% in 2020 from the previous year.

There is a huge diversity of stakeholders in this context, whose ongoing collaboration with CINDE allows the agency to support Costa Rica's dynamic labor market by, for example, communicating rapidly changing skill needs and validating course content in key sectors such as services, digital technologies, and tourism. In this context, working with digital-first workforce development programming gives CINDE more flexibility to respond to both what employers need and what workers want, in ways that more traditional programming does not always address or cannot easily pivot to.

This flexibility includes quickly changing curricula through access to a 6,000-item course catalog, addressing a wide range of target learner groups, and allowing “time poor” workers to upskill in a way that works for their schedules, which has allowed CINDE to reach scale, address a broad swath of stakeholder needs, and benefit Costa Rican society more broadly.

“

**We want Costa Ricans to understand that continuous learning and growth offers a path to new opportunities and stability—and eventually to landing their dream job.**

Lead, Strategic Projects for Investment  
Climate, CINDE

## Know Your Learners

It's important to preemptively understand your learner's challenges, needs, and motivators. Lack of devices (like computers or smartphones) and Wi-Fi connectivity are common inhibitors, but many learners don't fully understand online learning or how it may affect their employment opportunities. Often, learners lack the time to dedicate to online learning. It is possible to address some of these challenges within program design, but only if they are identified from the start.

You also need to give your learners a reason to participate in your program. Intrinsic motivation may be the ideal, but it might not be enough, particularly if your learners have other, more pressing, needs and obligations.



**We know these unemployed or underemployed Californians are disproportionately women, people of color, young people, and those without a college degree. A key driver in making these services available online is to help women return to employment who left the workforce during the pandemic.**

Greg Lucas  
State Librarian, California<sup>19</sup>

## 9 common target populations for workforce development learning programs

Polling with Coursera clients shows that digital-first workforce development programs at scale have focused on unemployed individuals as an initial target learner group.<sup>14</sup> However, seeing that scale also makes access easier, many have expanded their initial learner group to include youth, staff, incumbent workers, underemployed workers, and members of the general public who need support to move into new careers or progress further in their current careers.

- 1. Youth.** These are younger individuals (usually 15-30 years old) who may need support to begin their professional journeys. According to the [ILO](#),<sup>15</sup> “their unemployment rate is three times that of adults. More than one-in-five — 23.5 percent — of young people are not in employment, education, or training (NEET)”.
- 2. The unemployed.** These people are not currently working but would like to be.
- 3. The underemployed.** These people are [working but are overqualified](#) for the jobs they are doing or are not working full-time.<sup>16</sup>
- 4. Students.** These are people currently studying who will be entering the labor market shortly.
- 5. Justice-involved.** According to the [International Centre for Prison Studies](#),<sup>17</sup> more than 10.77 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world. In the U.S., a conviction record [reduces the chance of a job offer or callback by almost half](#).<sup>18</sup>
- 6. Incumbent workers.** These are people currently working anywhere in the labor force.
- 7. General public.** These people live in a geographic area covered by your agency.
- 8. Benefits recipients.** These people are currently receiving government assistance for basic living expenses.

## How to Incentivize Learners

A particular challenge for digital-first workforce development programs is attrition. Scale allows these programs to reach many people, but it is not always easy for everyone to complete the program. Incentives are a key component of driving engagement and completion. You can also track your learners using platform analytics, which can provide valuable, granular data on learner activity over hundreds, or even thousands of target learners. This data can help identify which incentives are most effective at keeping learners active and engaged—a benefit of digital over in-person programs.

Coursera clients have used varying combinations of financial incentives—like stipends or paid time off to complete training—and non-financial incentives—like certifications or access to digital tools like internet and personal computers—to support learner engagement and program completion.

Here’s a look at how two Coursera customers approached learner incentives.

Organization	Latin American investment promotion agency	U.S. private nonprofit
<p><b>Incentives Offered</b></p>	<p><b>Financial</b> Living stipend paid by the Ministry of Labor (enough to cover internet costs and basic living expenses)</p> <p><b>Non-financial</b> Activity and progress tracked closely and top performers rewarded by introducing them to job opportunities, organizing working sessions (in collaboration with training partners) for groups who were lagging behind (e.g. women)</p> <p>Inspirational learners stories (e.g. women completers)</p> <p>Community building through WhatsApp groups managed by training partners</p>	<p><b>Non-financial</b> Access to all entry-level Professional Certificates provided by Coursera for free</p> <p>Admittance for program completers to certain degree programs offered by a higher-education partner (tuition to be covered by learners)</p> <p>Innovative learner engagement such as strengths assessment courses, “purpose workshops”, virtual study halls, behavioral science-based nudging</p>

## Incentives in Action: MTN Skills Academy

To incentivize non-traditional learners, Rwanda's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology and Innovation, partnered with MTN, Africa's largest mobile network operator, and Coursera to launch [MTN Skills Academy](#).<sup>20</sup> This initiative enables those in impoverished communities across Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly youth who have exited formal education, to gain access to free broadband devices and online training for digital jobs. All of these are necessary preconditions for these youth to become empowered to break the cycle of poverty and become part of the modern digital economy.

“

**We are particularly pleased to have the tools to get to hard-to-reach places by getting devices into people's hands so that they can participate in the initiative and get the necessary skills to be employable.**

**Paula Ingabire**  
Rwanda's Minister of Information and Communications  
Technology and Innovation<sup>21</sup>

# Curate Content

Content curation is the process of intentionally filtering and organizing existing learning content (whether your own, or from a provider) to make it easy for learners to understand what content to engage with and how it helps them achieve their objectives.

Open platform learning—in which a learner has open access to a full catalog of courses—is a powerful democratizer of information and knowledge. But this sort of system can also be overwhelming to a learner or even distracting from the objectives of your workforce development program.

On Coursera alone, there are over 10,000 courses. Curating pathways and programs helps learners access content that meets their needs and is appropriate to their level.

## Content Curation Checklist

### Consider these steps when curating content for your workforce development program:

**Review the goals of the program, who learners are, and what skills they need to develop.**

- This is your north star in determining what content will be used, and how it will be made available to learners.
- The level and duration of your content should match your target learners. Keep this in mind throughout the curation process.

**Thoroughly review any existing content that your organization might have available.**

- Determine if there are gaps in the content.
- If there are gaps, consider if you want to create new content or source it from content providers for scale, speed, and/or cost-savings.

**Determine if there is additional content that needs to be specifically created for your program.**

- If this is the case, be specific about the learning objectives and instructional design to be developed. Note that developing bespoke digital content is an expensive and time-consuming process and must be considered in the context of broader programmatic scope and limitations.

**Evaluate content providers if you plan to source content.**

- Look at the breadth, depth, and difficulty level of the content they offer and how effectively they might be able to meet your current skill development needs, as well as potential future ones as those needs shift.
- Ask questions like how often content is refreshed, what quality and accuracy standards exist for instructional design, as well as other potential tools or features that might make the content more easily accessible or engaging to your learners and help program administrators track their progress.

Once the initial content has been determined, regularly ensure content is relevant to learners' needs and update if needed.

## Make or Buy? Key Considerations for Curating Content

Here are some key points to keep in mind as you determine if your program needs to create content itself, or if your program can buy pre-existing content.

### Make

- **Helpful** if the content you want to cover is unique to your organization or geographic area and so is unlikely to be commercially available
- **Helpful** if learners are not fluent in language(s) where pre-existing content is available
- **Requires** a longer timeframe for content curation
- **Requires** availability of subject matter experts
- **Requires** availability of instructional designers
- **Requires** availability of digital content creation tools and platforms
- **Requires** a larger budget for content creation
- **Requires** high capacity to maintain and update content produced

### Buy

- **Helpful** if the content you want to cover deals with a standard body of knowledge or widely used skills for an industry or target population
- **Helpful** if rapidly shifting skilling needs necessitates constant need for fresh content
- **Helpful** if learners are proficient in language(s) where pre-existing content is available
- **Helpful** if you are catering to a diverse set of target learners with varied skill development needs
- **Requires** availability of instructional designers
- **Requires** a shorter timeframe for content content curation
- **Requires** a smaller budget for content creation
- **Requires** a lower capacity for updating and maintaining custom-made content

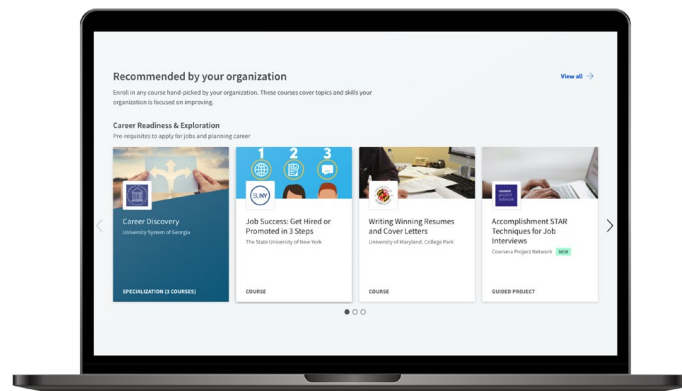
## Content Curation on Coursera

Content should help you achieve your stated outcomes. However, a few key curation principles can help ensure that you're facilitating access to the right content for each group of learners.

First, filter content to only the most relevant and level-appropriate courses to reduce decision fatigue for your learners.

Second, consider the grouping and sequencing of content. For example, a program intended to provide options to data scientists to learn new skills and tools might be grouped by specific tools or skills, like Probability and Statistics or Python Programming. Consider *sequencing* when your learners may be beginners and/or need a holistic reskilling path. For example, an unemployed person who wants to prepare for an entry-level data analytics role needs a complete, step-by-step sequence of courses to ensure they have the minimum set of skill and knowledge to qualify for a role.

Coursera has several ways of structuring and curating learning programs to meet learners' needs. These include SkillSets, Professional Certificates for entry-level roles, or collections that are pre-curated by subject matter experts to support industry-specific needs like healthcare or learning objectives like driving digital literacy or career readiness.



An example of the curated content on the Coursera platform.

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**Working with Coursera as a key strategic partner significantly expands the opportunities for our learners and institutions to access world-class educational content, faculty and institutions.**

**Dr. Abdullah Alwalidi**  
Director General, Saudi Arabia's National eLearning Center (NELC)

# Launch

## Overview

Be intentional about your program launch process. Without proper engagement, outreach, and marketing, these programs fail to reach the full scope of who could benefit from participating. If you build it, they will not come without being invited, followed up with, and consistently engaged.

Developing resources for successful onboarding, along with marketing your program to learners, is essential. Following these steps will help you better position your program for successful adoption by clearly communicating its value to learners.

“

**I think that how we get more people on board is by showing other people's success. And not just success in: 'I can use this program.' It's: 'This program helped change my life. Here's how.**

**Chris Fiore**  
Former Director Of Public Information,  
Louisiana Workforce Commission

## Onboard Admin and Learners

Online learning can be challenging for potential participants to engage with, especially if they've never experienced it. Having well-trained back-end support is essential so learners can successfully engage with digital-first workforce development programs. Learners need someone available who will help them out and encourage them to keep going from the beginning of the program.

This support should be able to answer questions like: How can learners enroll in your program and join your platform as quickly and seamlessly as possible? And what other kinds of support might learners need in their onboarding?

Likewise, support monitoring and reporting requirements from the beginning. If you know what indicators you want to watch over time, the easiest way to track them is by embedding them into your online learning platform. Your administrators can monitor dashboards as the program unfolds in real-time and provide updates to other program staff.

## 6 Steps for Onboarding Learners

When working with online learning partners, workforce development teams should expect to cover the following types of onboarding topics:

- 1. Review program goals and learning outcomes.** Make sure learners know what the program is about, and what value they will gain by participating.
- 2. Map out learner journey based on program design.** Confirm that the learner journey is clear and aligns with the program's goals.
- 3. Review how to invite learners and create learner accounts.** Determine how you will be sourcing your list of potential learners. This information is typically compiled in a spreadsheet and uploaded to an online learning platform to send out bulk invitations.
- 4. Confirm the learner onboarding flow.** Think about how a learner will sign up for the program. For example, is there a registration website? Has it been fully tested and validated? If there is not a website, has another type of onboarding flow been agreed on and tested? The flow should be smooth so learners can easily participate in your program.
- 5. Review reporting requirements.** Ensure the system can capture learner analytics and progress, preferably in dashboards or other easy to understand visual formats.
- 6. Review ways to communicate with learners to encourage them.** Discuss processes for engaging with existing learners to keep them motivated. Make sure to also remove inactive learners to make better use of licenses and other program assets.

## 3 Resources for Onboarding Learners

There are a variety of tools and services available to onboard learners effectively. Here are three types of tools that we recommend:

### 1. Launch email

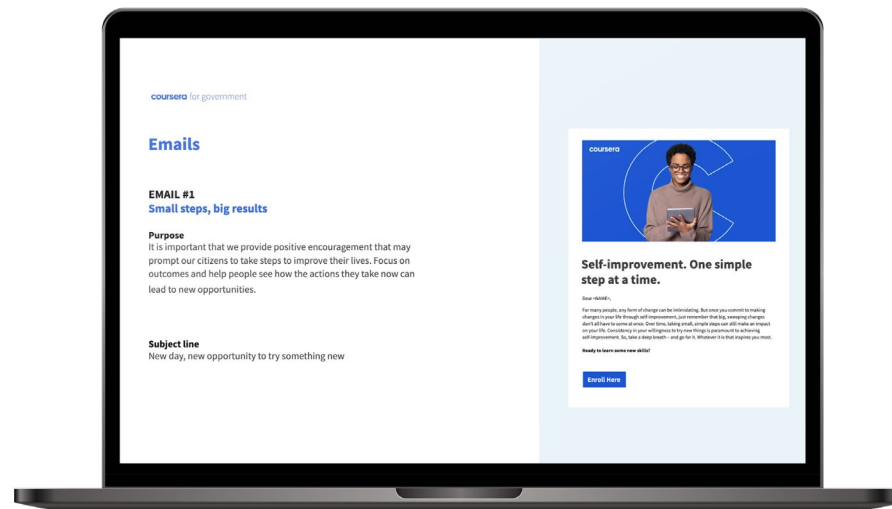
An email sent to registered users once your program goes live. It can help learners feel connected to your program and motivate them to begin their learning experience as soon as possible.

### 2. Registration email

An email that confirms learners have registered for your program, and provides essential information in anticipation of launch. If someone registers once the program is live, it can be combined with the launch email. This confirms to learners they have taken the first step and are on the right track to begin the program. This may be helpful to also remind learners when the launch date is, and when they can register for courses.

### 3. Onboarding guide

A document that provides learners with an overview of your program, how it works, and how they can engage with it along with an outline of the benefits they can expect to gain from successfully completing the program. This is helpful so that your learners have all relevant information about the program in one place, while feeling like they are part of a community that values their goals.



### Additional Resources

Are you a Coursera customer? [Download your free Coursera Marketing Kit here](#) for sample emails, presentations, videos, and other resources for launching your workforce development program.

# Market your Program

Marketing is the most important step in driving learners to your digital-first workforce development program. Workforce development agencies know their audiences, what they need, and can curate or develop amazing content, but getting the word out and driving adoption can be a big challenge.



In our experience, most workforce development programs have dedicated marketing campaigns to inform people about the program, including paid advertising, social media activity, and website content. There are other, non-traditional ways to reach potential learners as well, such as community outreach and through local chambers of commerce.



## 6 Best Practices for Building a Marketing Plan



- 1. Create a toolkit or administrator guide to support your program marketers.** This should include assets with commonly needed “how-tos” or frequently asked questions.
- 2. Define your marketing plan.** Determine which marketing activations from the toolkit or administrator guide will work best for your unique learners.
- 3. Make the investment.** Dedicate resources, like a marketing or communications leader, budget and well-designed enablement materials, to the marketing plan.
- 4. Aim for the fewest clicks to start learning.** Make it easy for your audience to learn about your program and available opportunities by building an online hub with onboarding resources, suggested courses, and next steps.
- 5. Plan to send 1.5x to 2.25x invitations to achieve full utilization.** For instance, if you have 5,000 licenses for an online learning platform, you likely will need to send out 7,500 - 11,250 invitation emails to maximize utilization.
- 6. Adopt an “always be engaging” mindset.** Sending invitations to join the platform by itself isn’t a guarantee of success. To really drive engagement and learning outcomes, you’ll need to share reminders and encourage learners to continue learning on a regular basis. Cultivate active learners by providing specific course recommendations, identifying outcomes, and using a direct call-to-action.

## Resources for Getting the Word Out

From scoping a marketing plan to leveraging channel-specific tactics, the below Coursera resources can provide a helpful starting point for launching your workforce development program and sustaining its reach:

 [Introduction to Social Media Marketing](#) by Meta  
 Approx. 15 hours to complete

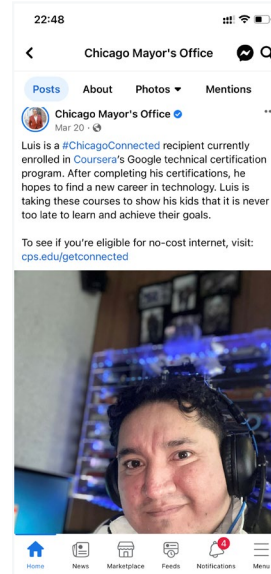
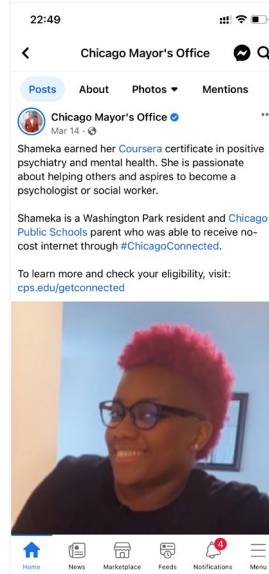
 [Digital Media and Marketing Principles](#) by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 Approx. 20 hours to complete

 [Social Media Marketing Professional Certificate](#) by Meta  
 Approx. 7 months to complete

## Marketing in Action: Chicago Connected

Local agencies can get creative with their marketing materials, because they know their audience well. For example, the Chicago Connected program provides free high-speed internet to over 42,000 families with students in the Chicago Public Schools to eliminate barriers to online learning. Many community members sought to build [computer literacy and job skills](#).<sup>23</sup> Surveys found tremendous interest in free online learning, and Chicago Connected families were extended free access to Coursera.

To market this new program, Chicago Connected used strategies that would resonate with their targeted learners through traditional advertising and social media. Here are a couple of examples of their social media marketing, which include real participants and their stories:



“

**Our goal is to give everyone who's excited about Coursera and committed to using it to learn and make progress the opportunity to do so...In the most recent cohort, every single Coursera license was used.**

**Devon Braunstein**

Digital Inclusion Policy Fellow, City of Chicago<sup>24</sup>

# Manage

## Overview

The third and final phase is to manage the program itself. Now that you have planned and launched your digital-first workforce development program, you need to engage learners and motivate them to complete the program. While learners are working their way through the program, you are also measuring both their individual success and the success of the program.

This phase is also essential to future iterations of your program. It ideally feeds back into planning to capture lessons learned and ideas for improvements. What worked? What were the challenges? During the Manage phase, you should be finding answers to all these questions, and more, about your digital-first workforce development program.

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**The future of training and skills-building is moving toward asynchronous, on-demand learning. Our numbers show that for many individuals, this is how they like, or need, to learn. Among other benefits gained and lessons learned, our partnership with Coursera showed us many ways in which our public workforce system and partners have work to do in order to adapt to and embrace these changes.**

**Ben Baglio**

Former Director, Governor's Workforce Development Board,  
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development<sup>25</sup>

# Engage Learners

It is important to proactively engage with learners in your digital-first workforce development program. This may take the shape of further marketing messages towards enrolled learners beyond registration. Some online learning platforms provide the ability to send reminder messages with the added advantage of being able to track learner progress.

Executed successfully, these tactics should encourage learners to work through and complete course material, bringing them one important step closer to their skills development goals to make them more competitive candidates in their local job markets.

## Tactics for Engaging Learners

The following are some learner engagement services and tools you can consider incorporating into your program:

### 1. Communities

- Create learner communities (like WhatsApp groups, or virtual study groups or study halls) to provide peer mentorship and support.

### 2. Monitoring

- Continuously monitor learner activity and performance. Recognize top learners and address issues that cause learners to get stuck.

### 3. Workshops

- Organize workshops around course completion or other services that could help learners in their job search activities, like career orientation, networking, or resume/CV writing.

### 4. Wraparound services

- Introduce a learner help desk and office hours to answer platform and curriculum related questions.
- Provide learners with individualized attention to support their growth, like a course that assesses their skill strengths.
- Offer complementary services through partners to support course completion, such as accountability coaching, career coaching, or nudging.

## Engaging Learners in Action: Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF)

Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF) is the largest skills development fund in Pakistan. PSDF funds training for over 100,000 young people every year through relationships with more than 600 training partners at over 2,000 locations. In its 10 years, PSDF has funded training for 500,000 youth, of which 42 percent are women.

PSDF engages with its learners in many different ways. They enable learners to sign up for Coursera courses directly through its website. Automating enrollment allowed the organization to verify learners' eligibility. PSDF uses Coursera APIs to pull key data into its learning management system (LMS), which makes it simple for PSDF to track how quickly learners begin courses and ensure they consistently log in and complete coursework. If a learner doesn't start a course or if their progress stalls, PSDF can send automated notifications and reach out to learners by text or phone.

PSDF also trains its call center employees to be able to support learners who have questions or need help using Coursera. The encouragement that learners receive from call center teams allows them to talk through any challenges or insecurities they face, away from their instructors and peers. With coaching and one-on-one relationships made in the call center, learners who may not be moving forward in a course are motivated to keep advancing. Using its call center in such a unique, personal way is part of the PSDF effort to increase the likelihood that learners will succeed.

**750+**  
graduates in  
less than a year

Nearly  
**4K**  
courses completed

**4.9**  
out of 5 average  
course rating

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**By finding such strong partners and fellow innovators in Coursera, we've opened many new doors in skills training and development. The partnership with Coursera has helped empower our learners, giving them the confidence and skills to go after their dream job.**

Salman Fayyaz  
Brand Manager, PSDF<sup>26</sup>

## Measure Success

Now is the time to bring the indicators you determined during the [Plan phase](#) to life. You can start monitoring learners and how they are moving through the course content, to ultimately be able to measure your program's success. You can ask learners directly about their engagement with the program and feedback. You can track touch-points learners have with different partners in their program.

Tracking and making assessments will tell you if your theory of change and logic models were correct. It will also provide you the information you and your team will need to be able to iterate on your program, to improve it for your next cohort of learners.

## How Online Learning Platforms Make it Easier to Track The Metrics That Matter

The ability to easily [demonstrate the value](#) of skill development at scale as soon as a program launches is a unique advantage of online learning platforms.<sup>27</sup>

This is because online learning platforms can easily track a variety of metrics that traditional in-person programs cannot, or struggle to. Some of these metrics are total time spent on learning, direct engagement with specific resources or assets within a course, time and engagement with a community of practice, full course completion, course skills development, and others progress-based indicators.

You can track these indicators from the moment learners begin to use your platform, and use that business intelligence to adjust as the program progresses to better support active learners, rather than waiting until the end to adapt for future learning cohorts.

## 3 Best Practices for Measuring Success

Metrics ensure the program's impact, keep stakeholders invested in the program's success, and support the resolution of challenges throughout a program's duration. Three key elements of measuring success include:



- 1. Monitor progress.** Refer to the agreed upon indicators and key metrics from the Plan phase. These may include:
  - Course enrollments
  - Learning hours
  - Course completion
  - Course feedback
  - Skills development – proficiency and progress
  - Learner satisfaction
  - Job acquisition and retention
  - Wages and earnings

**Note:** While monitoring progress, it is important to conduct regular reviews to assess progress internally, identify areas of improvement, and act on insights to improve your program.

- 2. Ask learners to share their stories.** These qualitative assessments can provide your evaluation and measurements of success with more nuanced and personal information about the impact your program is having on individuals.
- 3. Demonstrate the value of your program to leadership.** This can come through in a variety of ways. Some of these efforts are shorter-term, such as supporting people who need better jobs to get them as soon as possible or increasing participant engagement with partner organizations. Other efforts are longer-term, such as participants going on to higher education or investing in their long-term potential in other ways.

## Resources for Measuring Success

Monitoring and evaluation communicate the “what” and “how” of your programmatic intent and success through numbers and stories. We recommend the following content to help team members learn more about data collection methods and impact analytics:

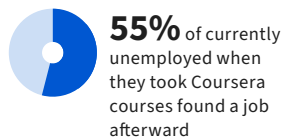
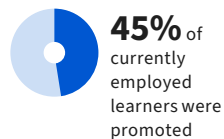
-  **Measurement – Turning Concepts into Data** by Johns Hopkins University  
Approx. 11 hours to complete
-  **Measuring and Modeling Impact in Evaluations** by Johns Hopkins University  
Approx. 11 hours to complete
-  **Survey Data Collection and Analytics: Specialization** by University of Maryland, College Park and The University of Michigan  
Approx. 8 months to complete

## Measuring Success in Action: Philippine’s Department of Science and Technology

Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF) is the largest skills development fund in Pakistan. PSDF funds training for over 100,000 young people every year through relationships with more than 600 training partners at over 2,000 locations. In its 10 years, PSDF has funded training for 500,000 youth, of which 42 percent are women.

After launching the Coursera for Workforce Recovery program, government surveys found that almost 100 percent of program participants wanted to continue learning with Coursera. They also highlighted the diversity of learners served. Roughly 55 percent of people who were unemployed when they took Coursera courses found a job afterward, and 45 percent of learners who were already employed earned a promotion after completing Coursera courses. 75 percent of learners said that their training from Coursera improved the quality of their work.<sup>28</sup>

Inside these statistics, there are people bettering their lives and advancing society. Even people who owned their businesses said that Coursera helped them run their businesses more effectively, showing the value that learners got through this program.



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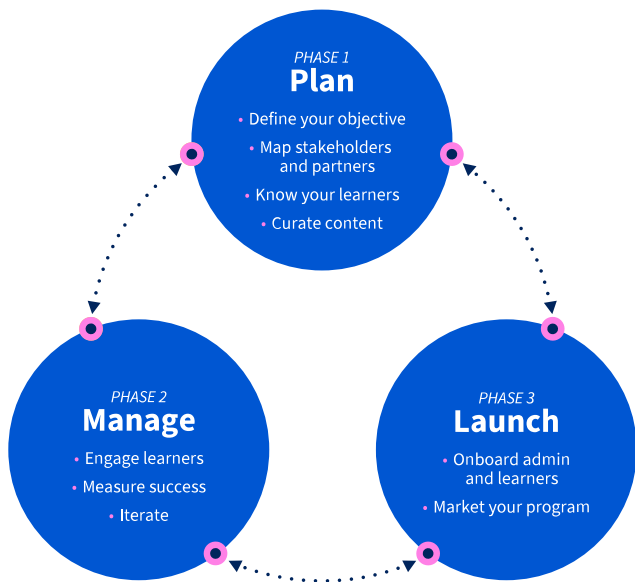
**We’ve seen first-hand that Coursera has an immediate social impact in developing countries, helping to level the field for underserved people with world-class job training and skills development.**

**Noel Ajoc**  
Regional Director, Caraga Region, Philippines DOST<sup>29</sup>

*\*Organizations partner with Coursera for Government to launch large-scale online programs that enable thousands of job-seekers to learn career-relevant skills. While the experiences of each customer and its learners in adopting learning tools and programs may be different based on a number of factors, this case study captures the real experiences of the Philippines Department of Science and Technology and the learners that it serves, as self-reported to Coursera.*

# Iterate

At this point, the program development process returns to the [Plan phase](#). Make adjustments based on learnings from implementation, as well as with any changes in strategy or goals that may have been agreed upon since the program was launched.



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The insights that our community-based partners continue to elevate from Chicago families have allowed Chicago Connected to evolve to serve Chicagoans’ needs in new and different ways.

Daniel Anello  
CEO, Kids First Chicago<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

The stakes are high for closing the skills gap and driving sustainable employment around the world. Digital-first workforce development programs are making it easier for workforce development leaders to support their learners at scale, meeting them where they are, and providing learners with the skills they need for jobs that they can do well into the future.

These programs can be complex, with many moving parts so, proper planning, an organized launch, and ongoing management provide a structure that gives your program the best chances of success. It is key to remember that all of this is an iterative process. Be open-minded and flexible, as you plan, launch, and manage your program. Keep in mind that everything will be iterated multiple times, based on your successes and challenges, to best serve your learners.

Celebrate your program's achievements while learning from your challenges. We're here to do both and continue learning together as we move into the future.

Coursera is a leading global expert in supporting digital-first workforce development programs at scale. Learn how we can work together to drive sustainable economic growth and build a competitive future-ready workforce.

[Request a consultation](#)

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**Our partnership with Coursera...is really a perfect match as it fits into our larger vision on how the Alamo Colleges is innovating and preparing learners of all backgrounds for the future of work. We are excited to have this partnership to offer training for learners to gain the skills needed for high-wage, high-demand jobs across San Antonio.**

**Luke Dowden**  
Chief Online Learning Officer and Associate Vice Chancellor  
of Academic Success, Alamo Colleges District

# Endnotes

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**coursera** for government