

MEET THE LEARNERS

of the Google IT Support Professional Certificate

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JFF



Introduction

The Google IT Support Professional Certificate prepares people with no IT training or background for entry-level careers in this high-demand sector. JFF has helped more than 100 community colleges and approximately 25 nonprofits implement the Certificate through research and technical assistance, and by conducting an evaluation.

What types of learners thrive in this program? Through a cluster analysis, we found that five personas—types of people—are successful in this program. Armed with this knowledge, colleges and nonprofits can select and support participants effectively and in a manner that best positions the participants for long-term success in an IT career.





PERSONA 1

COLLEGE LEARNER

Career Advancer: James

JAMES

BACKGROUND

Self-Starter With IT Skills

- James is 28 years old and a first-generation American.
- He has experience as an IT generalist at several small businesses; he does not have a college degree.

COLLEGE FOCUS

Build a Stackable Credential

- James completes the Google Certificate within a standalone, noncredit program while working full time.

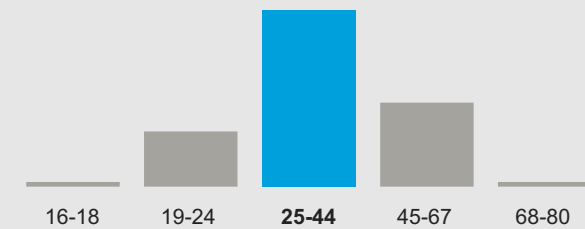
FUTURE GOAL

Land a Role at a Large Company

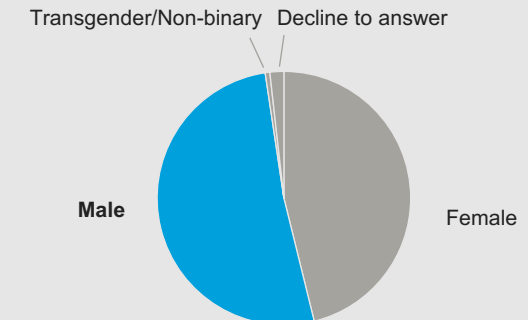
- The Certificate has made the college experience accessible for James. He is focused on parlaying his new skills into a job at a major company.

Key Characteristics of Career Advancers

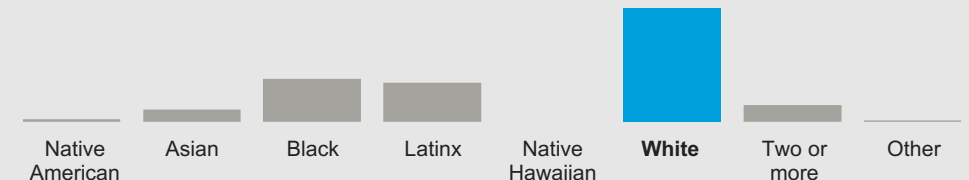
Age



Gender



Race / Ethnicity





Recommendations

Building Programs to Support Career Advancers

- **Build connections to local IT employers.** Use job placement services, work-based learning, or mentorship opportunities to jump-start completers' IT careers.
- **Help learners pursue other well-recognized, stackable credentials.** Complement the Certificate with credentials such as the CompTIA A+ Certification, which [JFF research](#) has shown to be a “door opener” for the IT field.
- **Provide navigation support for next steps in education and employment.** Learners who want to pursue a postsecondary degree need to understand degree on-ramps, including stackable credentials. They also need information about how their skills—current and newly acquired—qualify them for in-demand job openings and specific roles within the IT field.



Best Practices: Supporting Career Advancers

Eastern Gateway Community College

- After a successful for-credit implementation of the Certificate program, Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC) in Steubenville, Ohio, began offering it to dislocated workers on a noncredit basis. These learners need new skills to become more employable.
- The program was designed with plenty of student support: Three staff members orient new students and support them throughout the course. The onboarding process includes an initial interview with prospective students, who sign an enrollment agreement outlining their responsibilities. Students have easy access to EGCC staff — including their instructor and a career coach — throughout the program.
- Employer engagement is key. An EGCC career coach helps students prepare resumes and connect with local employers, including an AT&T call center and VXi Global Solutions, which manages companies' contact centers around the world.



PERSONA 2

NONPROFIT LEARNER

Opportunity Seeker: Stephanie

STEPHANIE

BACKGROUND

Recent High School Graduate New to IT

- Stephanie is a 19-year-old who is currently working in retail. Her hours have been reduced because of the pandemic, and she is looking for a longer-term career path.
- She is new to IT but is an active mobile user and has a talent for troubleshooting cash register issues at her store.

FOCUS

Build Foundational IT Skills

- Stephanie completes the Google Certificate in an online program through community center where it is offered free of charge

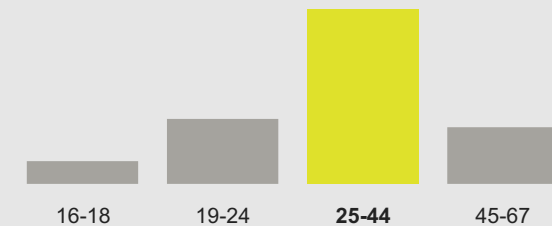
FUTURE GOAL

Translate the Certificate Into a Pathway

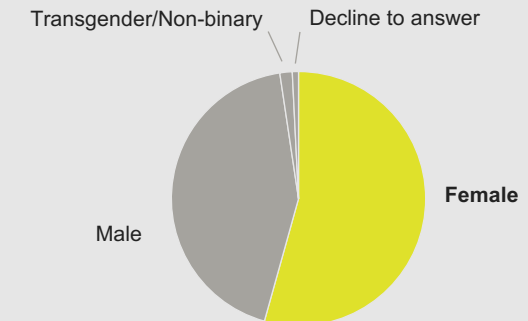
- The Certificate helped Stephanie develop knowledge of IT. She is working to land a job in IT support or move onto the more advanced CompTIA A+ Certification.

Key Characteristics of Opportunity Seekers

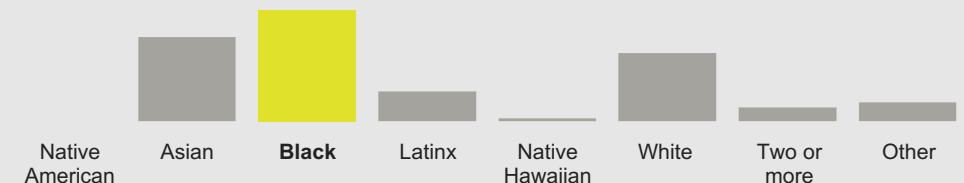
Age



Gender



Race / Ethnicity





Recommendations

Building Programs to Support Opportunity Seekers

- **Build IT skills *and* baseline skills.** Ensure that programs intentionally complement Google curriculum with basic skills in collaboration, communication, and problem solving.
- **Focus on intensive navigation support.** Ensure that participants gain exposure to the range of pathways available in the IT sector and the training required for various roles. When possible, build career planning directly into the program so that learners have concrete next steps after completion.
- **Create cohort-based experiences to support retention.** Learners with barriers may struggle as they navigate complex material in a new field. Building intentional communities and supporting peer connections is a key lever of support to help ensure persistence and completion.

Best Practices: Opportunity Seekers

GISC Canada

- GISC implemented the Certificate fully online and in a hybrid model through several public library systems — including those in Toronto, Edmonton, Surrey, and Hamilton.
- GISC used “[Learning Circles](#)” as a core feature of its program delivery model. This highly interactive, participatory structure for organizing group work helped build peer support and accountability among cohorts of learners, which is especially helpful as learners navigate a new field. GISC found that sites using this model had significantly higher completion rates than those whose participants solely interacted online.
- By regularly collecting data on learner experiences, GISC was able to integrate participants’ feedback into program updates to support ongoing improvement.



PERSONA 3

NONPROFIT LEARNER

Skilled Professional: Amir

AMIR

BACKGROUND

New Immigrant and Experienced IT Professional

- Amir is a 38-year-old immigrant from Pakistan who worked in IT in his home country for several years and is very comfortable using technology.
- He likes to keep his content knowledge current and has completed several online courses.

FOCUS

Advance IT Knowledge

- Amir sees that a local community-based organization is offering the Google Certificate and enrolls right away.

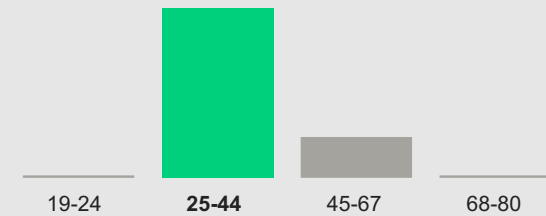
FUTURE GOAL

Demonstrate Current Skills and Knowledge

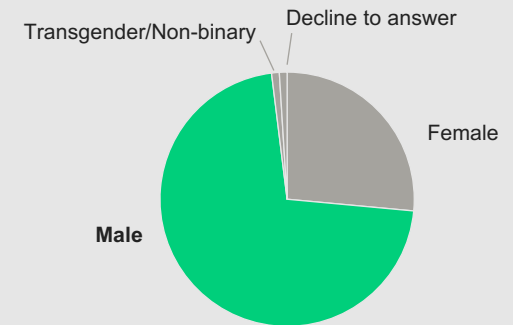
- He completes the Certificate quickly and immediately updates his resume and LinkedIn profile. While Amir is happy in his current IT role, he's always open to new challenges and would like to increase his salary.

Key Characteristics of Skilled Professional

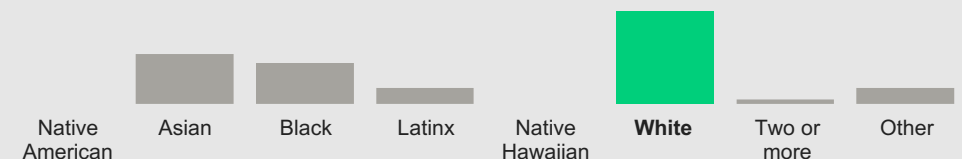
Age



Gender



Race / Ethnicity





Recommendations

Building Programs to Support Skilled Professionals

- **Provide Flexibility and Encourage Acceleration.** Provide flexibility to enable these learners to effectively balance the program with full-time work. Enable learners who are working professionals to move through the content at an accelerated pace — since they are familiar with many of the key topics and skills.
- **Leverage Content Knowledge and Experience.** When possible, provide opportunities for these learners to serve as mentors and subject matter experts for other learners in the program. Their knowledge of the field can provide valuable insights and can be a useful support to instructors.
- **Customize Supports.** Learners with work experience may still benefit from some targeted supports — such as supplemental English instruction, interviewing tips, or more insight into potential IT career pathways. Enable these learners to take advantage of specific supports aligned with their needs.



Best Practices: Skilled Professional

Upwardly Global

- Prior to enrolling in the Google Certificate program, learners complete four online job search readiness trainings; this enables them to become comfortable with virtual programming and gain exposure to online curricula and asynchronous learning experiences.
- Personal coaches refer learners to Upwardly Global after evaluating their professional career goals, existing skill sets, and technical aptitude to ensure alignment with desired outcomes.
- Program managers send biweekly progress reports to all organizational job coaches who have learners enrolled in the Certificate program. These reports include information that coaches can use to customize follow-up supports, create incentives for completion, and encourage learner persistence. If learners are struggling or falling behind, coaches schedule meetings to troubleshoot problems and provide additional support.



PERSONA 4

Skill Seeker: Jesse

NONPROFIT LEARNER

JESSE

BACKGROUND

Career Changer

- Jesse is 23 and has been working for more than seven years. He has a full-time job as a customer service representative — which enables him to support his young family — but he feels stuck in his career.
- He doesn't have a bachelor's degree, but he does have intermediate tech skills and wants to build on this foundation to find a role in IT.

FOCUS

Strengthen IT Skills

- Jesse doesn't have the time or resources to attend college, but when he sees that a local nonprofit is offering the Google Certificate, he thinks it would be a great fit and is encouraged by the program's ties to the Google brand.

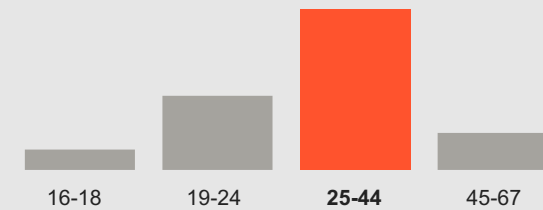
FUTURE GOAL

Find a Help Desk Role

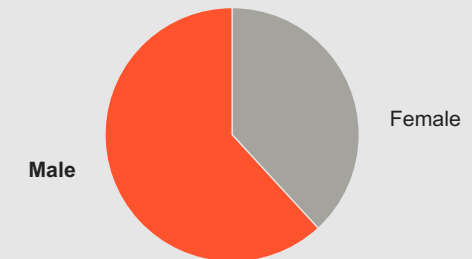
- Jesse is looking for a help desk job that would enable him to combine his customer service skills with the IT knowledge he gained in the Certificate program.

Key Characteristics of Skill Seekers

Age



Gender



Race / Ethnicity





Recommendations

Building Programs to Support Skill Seekers

- **Strengthen Basic Literacy and Numeracy.** Ensure that learners who don't have college experience can build foundational skills as they gain IT-specific knowledge and competencies.
- **Provide Stipends or “Learn and Earn” Opportunities.** Workers who are hoping to change careers may need to reduce their hours or leave their current jobs altogether to focus on building new skills. Providing stipends or offering the Certificate as part of a “learn and earn” program can help learners maintain financial stability and enable them to stay in the course until they finish.
- **Focus on Placement Support.** Ensure that participants can leverage their prior work experience and help them prepare to navigate the job search process by offering mock interview and resume development workshops and sharing leads on potential job opportunities.



Best Practices: Skill Seekers

NPower U.S.

- NPower has partnerships with community-based organizations that offer basic literacy and numeracy classes, creating an on-ramp to IT training for interested learners who may not yet have the skills for the Google Certificate program. Learners also receive academic support during the 16-week training through instructor-led classes and small group tutoring.
- Paid internships (of a minimum of seven weeks) are offered to all learners so they can focus on their training instead of worrying about earning money to pay their bills.
- NPower recruits volunteer employer partners to run mock interviews, provide coaching, and introduce learners to workplace norms. Students participate in a micro project to learn about workplace success, and mentors offer feedback. An internship placement manager and a career placement manager meet with students to discuss career readiness skills, internships, and job placement. They cover topics such as professional dress, social media profiling, resume writing, professionalism online and on the job, customer service, and emotional intelligence. Alumni in good standing can also take advantage of career readiness resources.



PERSONA 5

COLLEGE LEARNER

Degree Seeker: Maria

Maria

BACKGROUND

Experienced Professional With Some College

- Maria started college in her 20s but had to step back to raise her family. She has worked since she was in high school, mainly in office settings.
- Now 46, she works part time as a bookkeeper and recently re-enrolled in her local community college.

FOCUS

Build IT Skills, With a focus on Business

- Maria encounters the Google Certificate in one of her first IT courses. She appreciates the accessible, energizing material and the voices of actual IT professionals, some of whom have backgrounds similar to hers.

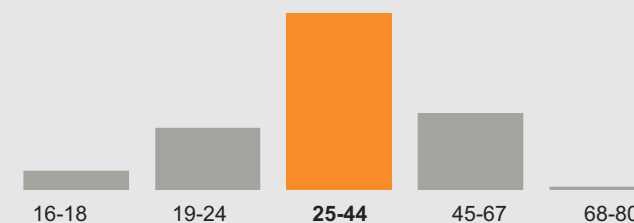
FUTURE GOAL

Complete Her Associate Degree

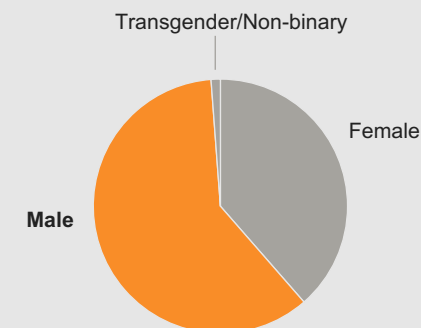
- Maria is focused on finishing her degree but is excited that she was able to complete the Google Certificate in one semester and has already added it to her resume.

Key Characteristics of Degree Seekers

Age



Gender



Race / Ethnicity





Recommendations

Building Programs to Support Degree Seekers

- **Build Confidence and a Growth Mindset.** Starting a training program in a technical field can be difficult, especially for learners who are returning after a hiatus from school. Providers can help these learners build confidence and better navigate the college environment if they help them focus on growth and connect the subjects they're studying to knowledge they already have.
- **Focus on Early Intervention and Support.** Even highly-motivated learners can struggle; providers should meet with degree seekers regularly to discuss the coursework and the progress they're making so that they can offer timely support if challenges arise. This can help ensure that minor academic difficulties do not impede progress toward a degree.
- **Highlight Opportunities for Stackable Credentials.** Providers should offer learners opportunities to "stack" credentials as they work toward completing their degrees. This enables them to strengthen their subject-area knowledge and build their resumes.



Best Practices: Degree Seekers

Wallace State Community College

- Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, Alabama, offered the Google Certificate as part of a credit pathway. The school embedded the content into two courses (one about IT fundamentals and one about operating systems) spread over two semesters. The program included synchronous and asynchronous learning in various forms, including office hours, virtual cohort gatherings, one-on-one check-ins, and regular virtual classes.
- Wallace State recruited students from the target learner population — especially those new to IT — by clearly marketing the course as foundational learning for three IT pathways: cybersecurity, network technology, and computer programming.
- The college arranged for learners to be placed into internship or apprenticeship opportunities and provided them with baseline skills training to help further improve their employability.
- An adjunct faculty member with significant industry experience and ties to the local business community supported employer engagement efforts.