

Integrating User-Centered Design Principles into LER Development

Promoting Equity in Learning
Through Inclusive LER Design



Introductions



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Our Mission

Digital Promise shapes the future of learning and advances equitable education systems by bringing together solutions across research, practice, and technology.



Our Vision

Every person engages in powerful learning experiences that lead to a life of well-being, fulfillment, and economic mobility.



About Digital Promise

Digital Promise is a global nonprofit working to expand opportunity for every learner. We work with educators, researchers, technology leaders, and communities to design, investigate, and scale innovations that support learners, especially those who've been historically and systematically excluded.



Digital Promise's Impact Goals

Our Impact Goals reflect the future of learning that we are working to build. They are student-centered, equity-focused, and ambitious — just like the work we are doing to achieve them.

Achieving these Impact Goals won't be easy — it will take collaboration across research, practice, and technology to tackle education's big challenges and push the bounds of what's possible for learners and educators.

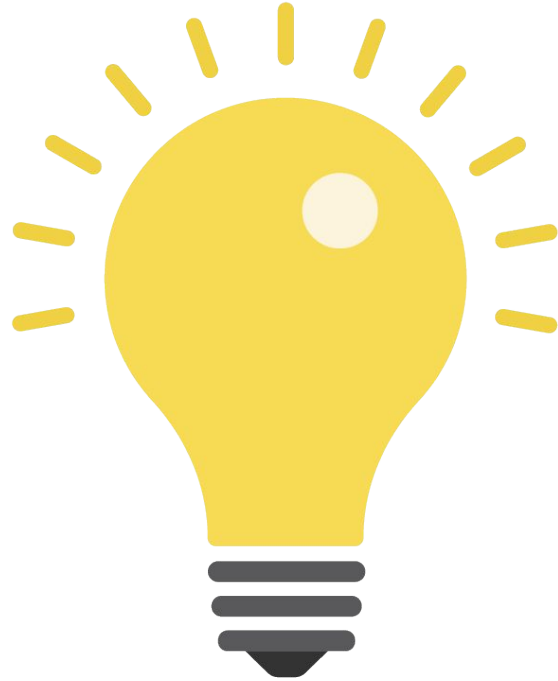


Session Objectives

- Understand what Learning Experience Records (LERs) are (and what they are not)
- Examine how LERs support learner pathways and workforce mobility
- Explore User-Centered Design (UCD), its application to LER development, and the benefits
- Discuss actionable strategies for integrating UCD into standard design practices to create valuable, meaningful, and accessible experiences

Prompt

Think about a student or worker you serve. If they needed to document their skills for an employer today, what tools would they use? Would they be successful?



Let's Discuss

1. What's working well today?
2. What's missing?
3. Who is being left out of the current system?
4. Why is it important to address this?



LERs Explained:

What They Are, What They Aren't, and How They Propel
Learner Success

What is a Learner Employment Record (LER)?

Definition:

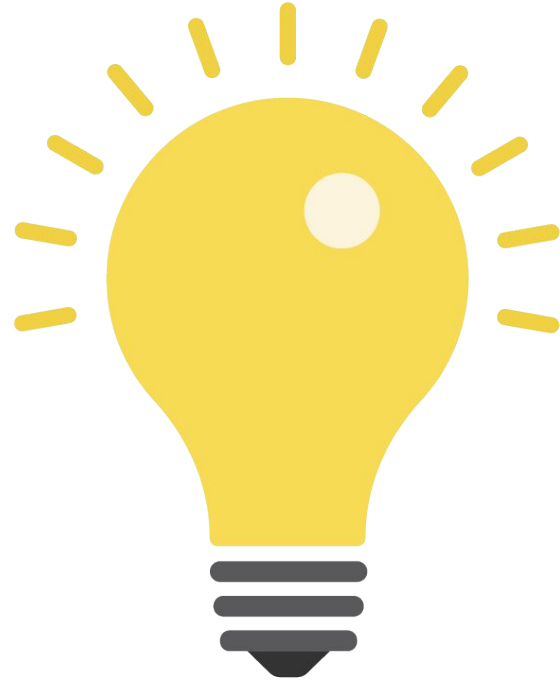
A digital record that captures a learner's skills, competencies, and experiences across education and work settings—beyond traditional transcripts and resumes.

What an LER is NOT:

- Not just a digital resume (e.g., LinkedIn).
- Not a replacement for a diploma or certification.
- Not effective if it doesn't connect with employers and learning systems.

Key Question

Would an LER in its current form help the students or workers you support? Why or why not?



How LERs Support Learner & Worker Success

The Problem Today:

- Many learners struggle to translate their skills into employer-friendly language.
- Work-based learning, apprenticeships, and industry credentials aren't always recognized equitably.
- Traditional records (transcripts, resumes) don't tell the whole story.

LERs as a Solution:

- Provide portable, skills-based records.
- Support career mobility for non-traditional learners.
- Help employers better assess candidates based on skills rather than pedigree.

To be a solution...LERs have to work effectively for all users

Success Lies in Inclusivity:

Harnessing User-Centered Design to Elevate LER
Development

User-Centered Design (UCD) in LER Development

Why User-Centered Design?

- Who are LERs actually designed for—educators? Employers? Learners?
- If learners and workers can't easily use and understand them, they won't be effective.

Example:

- What happens when tools aren't designed for diverse users? (Think of a confusing job application portal—who gets left out?)

Reflection Questions:

- What are some unique challenges you have come across that could be addressed by designing for diverse audiences?

Building User-Centered Designs with IUX

What is Inclusive User Experience (IUX)?

- IUX is a design approach that emphasizes creating experiences that are accessible, valuable, and satisfying to all users
- This is considered a key part of user-centered design

Benefits of IUX?

- IUX considers factors that span user identities, which can help expand audience reach, and increase user engagement and satisfaction

What Does This Mean for LERs:

- Helps create more intuitive, engaging, and inclusive experiences that adequately support learners and workers in their journeys

Key Question

How can being included change how learners and worker express their learning journeys? What could this mean for recruiters and the workforce?



User-Centered Design Strategies:

Harnessing User-Centered Design to Elevate LER
Development

Design with Direction: Design Principles for Equitable LERs

Digital Promise Design Principles - Created through co-design sessions with real learners and workers for developing equitable LER experiences. These key principles center:



Authenticity

Recognizing
real-world
experiences



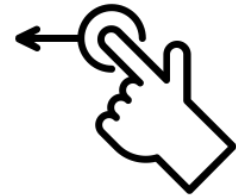
Inclusivity

Designed for all
learners



Transparency

Clear, understandable,
and accessible



Usability

Practical for learners,
educators, and employers

Inclusive Design

- ❑ Demonstrates evidence of skills and competencies in addition to work history
- ❑ Demonstrates learning progress over time, not just one point in time, such as a degree completion
- ❑ Provides individuals with control of how their information is presented and shared
- ❑ Prioritize lifelong access and ease of use
- ❑ Address safety and privacy concerns, especially for historically and systematically marginalized individuals

Learning Transitions

- ❑ Connect people with supports
- ❑ Connect people to opportunities
- ❑ Include indicators of skills- and learning add
- ❑ Empower people with translatable skills-based practices
- ❑ Adopt a comprehensive approach to digital credentialing
- ❑ Be inclusive of people's identity, movement, and language
- ❑ Integrate with a variety of tools

Onboarding & Education

- ❑ Make value proposition clear
- ❑ Offer technology and content support
- ❑ Use inclusive language and design
- ❑ Ensure data integration accuracy
- ❑ Conducting ongoing user testing for continuous improvement

Small Group Discussion

1. Which of these principles resonates most with your work?
2. What would be your biggest concern in implementing these principles as a part of design standards?

Case Studies - Inclusive LERs in Action

Inclusive LERs in the Workforce

The Problem: Businesses have trouble searching for talent to hire, especially in small towns

- Collaborated with key subject matter experts in the (Montana) community to deeply understand hiring needs
- Identified features to include in future LER development to highlight local talent that can meet employer needs and reduce turnover

Inclusive LERs for Learners

The Problem: Barriers persist because of nuances in the contexts surrounding learners and workers

- Included culturally involved experts who brought awareness of issues on behalf of learners that would otherwise be missed
- Learners in this community can now supported effectively in showcasing their learning journeys

Design with Direction: Using Personas

What Are Personas?

Personas are fictional characters that represent groups of users and help:

- Assess design decisions
- Act as a guideline for prioritizing the broader needs
- Drive empathy among the developers
- Center the user experience

Go Above and Beyond By Incorporating IUX


- Create personas based on real data from diverse communities
- Include accessibility needs in learner/worker profiles
- Iterate with diverse user groups and stakeholders throughout the design process

Case Study - Inclusive Personas in Action

Persona Creation for LER Pilots

Problem: LER development was stalled due to lack of direction

- Compiled knowledge on learners and workers from key subject matter experts in the community
- Created a set of 5 key personas
- Used the personas to map the user experience
- Flagged potential barriers and opportunities for improvement
- Prioritized the main items to tackle



TRACY MARTINEZ




Profile HS Senior
Age 17
From Brookline


Tracy is a 17-year-old high school senior balancing her part-time job at a grocery store and preparing college applications. Her parents, immigrants from Guatemala, encourage her to pursue higher education, but Tracy often feels overwhelmed by the tech requirements of modern applications. She's eager to explore STEM fields but has limited exposure to mentors or internships.

Key Need: Career and college readiness guidance and mobile-friendly tools.

Goals	Top Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain college admission• Explore career opportunities and various educational and employment pathways in STEM• Understand skills needed for desired careers• Build the beginnings of a competitive professional profile• Earn enough to take care of the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access mobile-friendly tools for applications• Identify her dream job and the available pathways• Upload and attach relevant documentation• Access college prep resources• Connect with mentors

Frustrations	Characteristics	Key Features								
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited access to reliable internet• Inadequate in-school college and career counseling and advice• Lack of mentors in STEM	<table><tr><td>Technical Skills</td><td>● ● ● ●</td></tr><tr><td>LMS Familiarity</td><td>● ● ● ●</td></tr><tr><td>Access</td><td>● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●</td></tr><tr><td>Comfort Level</td><td>● ● ● ●</td></tr></table>	Technical Skills	● ● ● ●	LMS Familiarity	● ● ● ●	Access	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Comfort Level	● ● ● ●	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant college readiness resources• Career pathways visualization• Salary snapshot information• Degree requirement resources• College selection resources
Technical Skills	● ● ● ●									
LMS Familiarity	● ● ● ●									
Access	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●									
Comfort Level	● ● ● ●									

Devices   

Usage 

What are the unique challenges that impact the intersection of learners and workers in this area?

Steps for Integrating UCD into Design Standards & Practices

- ✓ **Establish** a user research framework
- ✓ **Create** detailed user personas and journey maps
- ✓ **Develop and test** prototypes frequently to guide design decisions
- ✓ **Incorporate** iterative usability testing and co-design sessions with diverse communities
- ✓ **Create** a cross-functional design team that represents different perspectives
- ✓ **Include** accessibility and inclusivity practices early
- ✓ **Establish** continuous feedback loops to drive development
- ✓ **Promote** a culture of empathy and learning by involving community members

Key Takeaways

LERs could transform skills-based hiring, but they need to be:

- **User-centered** – Designed for learners, not just institutions.
- **Equitable** – Including all types of learning.
- **Connected** – Employers and education systems must recognize them.

Call to Action:

- Consider what you know about your learners and workers and how this understanding shows up in your development process
- Consider how you center learners and workers in your development work currently
- Consider how you might apply these combined strategies in your work environments

Contact Information



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Our education
challenges are
multifaceted.

So is our work.

