

Skills initiative

Frequently asked questions

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Overview

Helping people impacted by COVID-19 learn the skills for in-demand roles in a more digital economy

COVID-19 has created a global economic crisis, forcing tens of millions of people around the world out of work. Some of the jobs lost will not come back, or at least not fast enough to meet demand. Those that do come back will look different, requiring more digital skills as companies race to change the way they work to respond to and recover from the pandemic. Other jobs will become more “tech-enabled,” requiring job seekers to have some level of digital fluency to be able to pursue them.

In the post-COVID world, all people—especially those from the hardest hit industries and the most vulnerable communities—will need to learn new skills to rejoin the workforce prepared for technical and tech-enabled roles that will be in even greater demand going forward.

We have a responsibility and an opportunity to help.

Microsoft has been committed to closing the skills gap for decades, but now is the time to accelerate efforts and build partnerships that help job seekers worldwide reskill and rejoin the workforce.

That’s why Microsoft has committed to help 25 million people worldwide who have lost their job due to COVID-19 to reskill for in-demand roles in a more digital economy.

General info

What is Microsoft's new skilling commitment?

In June 2020, Microsoft announced an ambitious initiative aimed at bringing more digital skills to 25 million people this calendar year. This comprehensive technology initiative will bring together every part of our company, combining existing and new resources from LinkedIn, GitHub, and Microsoft. It will be grounded in three areas of activity:

1. The use of data to identify in-demand jobs and the skills needed to fill them.
2. Free access to learning paths and content to help people develop the skills these positions require.
3. Low-cost certifications and free job-seeking tools.

This initiative will build upon data on jobs and skills from the LinkedIn Economic Graph, and provide free access to content in LinkedIn Learning, Microsoft Learn, and the GitHub Learning Lab – coupled with Microsoft Certifications and LinkedIn job seeking tools.

In addition, Microsoft is backing the effort with \$20 million in cash grants to help nonprofit organizations enable this initiative for people who need it most, including people from communities that are underserved or under-represented in technology. \$15 million will be provided in cash grants to 50 community-based nonprofit organizations that are led by and serve communities of color in the United States.

Employees will also need to skill and reskill through their careers, and we want to make it easier for employers to help. Our vision is a connected “system of learning” that helps empower everyone to pursue lifelong learning, which is why we are announcing that Microsoft is developing a new learning app in Microsoft Teams to help employers upskill new and existing employees. This will bring together best in class content from LinkedIn Learning, Microsoft Learn, third party training providers, and a company's own learning content and make it all available in a place where employees can easily learn in the flow of their work.

We are also pledging that we will make stronger data and analytics available to governments around the world so they can better assess local economic needs. Finally, we will use our voice to advocate for public policy innovations that we believe will advance the skilling opportunities people will need in the changed economy.

While this represents the largest skills initiative in Microsoft's history, we recognize that no company can come close to closing the skills gap alone. Sustained progress will require a renewed partnership between across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and we're committed to supporting this.

Is there a centralized place where people can go to access these newly available tools and resources?

Yes, job seekers can visit aka.ms/JobSeeker to begin pursuing in-demand technology skills for free today.

What type of skills training is offered, and what type of jobs will they help with?

Based on the data about in-demand roles, LinkedIn Learning and Microsoft Learn are offering ten role-based learning paths, along with three foundational skill learning paths. These ten roles are:

1. Software developer
2. Sales development rep
3. Project manager
4. IT administrator
5. Customer service specialist
6. Digital marketer
7. IT support/help desk
8. Graphic designer
9. Financial analyst
10. Data analyst

LinkedIn Learning will also offer access to four foundational skill learning paths:

1. Job seeker
2. Critical soft skills
3. Digital transformation
4. Allyship and inclusive conversations

For each of these ten roles, job seekers can access rich content from LinkedIn Learning's library of collaborative courses, all taught by industry-expert instructors, allowing the job seeker to move through the content with ease and demonstrate their learning with a certificate of completion. Job seekers who have completed the LinkedIn Learning pathways or are interested in engaging in technical skilling and certification on Microsoft technologies will be also be able to easily access rich content from Microsoft Learn aligned to the role-based learning paths. Developed to help our customers quickly learn Microsoft products and prepare for certifications, Microsoft Learn is available free of charge and will continue to be free of charge in the future.

How will this help people who have lost their job due to COVID-19 in the short term?

We're shining a light on the skills and jobs that are in demand, giving people free access to learning paths to develop the skills that are needed, and helping them demonstrate they have these skills. We hope this comprehensive approach will help people find jobs in an increasingly digital economy.

Microsoft is backing the effort with \$20 million in cash grants to help nonprofit organizations worldwide assist those who need it most, including people with lower income, lower educational attainment and underrepresented minorities. One-quarter of this total, or \$5 million, will be provided in cash grants to 50 community-based nonprofit organizations led by and serving communities of color in the United States.

Exactly who is Microsoft hoping to reach by making its tools more accessible?

Every person needs digital skills to succeed in our increasingly technology-driven economy, however the individuals whose careers have been affected by the crisis are those who we are hoping to reach. From the

existing IT workers looking upskill, to the average worker looking to transform their career, we aim to support everyone impacted by the COVID-19 economic crisis who wishes to skill or upskill.

What's the difference between Microsoft Learn and LinkedIn Learning? Why do you have two separate platforms?

LinkedIn Learning is an online learning platform that helps professionals learn relevant skills to achieve their goals, with a library of 16,000+ courses taught by expert instructors. Microsoft Learn trains learners on Microsoft products and technologies for specific technical jobs and was initially created to assist Microsoft's customers and partners to learn our technology.

How were these learning paths selected?

These ten roles were determined based on data from the LinkedIn Economic Graph. The Economic Graph is a digital representation of the global economy based on over 690 million members, 36,000 skills, 50 million companies, 20 million open jobs, and 90,000 schools. In short: It's all the data on LinkedIn. Through mapping every member, company, job, and school, LinkedIn is able to spot trends like talent migration, hiring rates, and in-demand skills by region. These insights help LinkedIn connect people to economic opportunity in new ways. And by partnering with governments and organizations around the world, LinkedIn helps them better connect people to opportunities.

LinkedIn leveraged data and insights from the Economic Graph to identify jobs that:

- Have the greatest number of job openings.
- Pay a livable wage.
- Can be obtained by reskilling on LinkedIn Learning.
- Are accessible for people with various backgrounds- majority of which are attainable for those without a four-year degree.

These jobs not only have the greatest number of job openings now, but the Economic Graph data also shows which jobs have had steady growth over the past four years.

Based on these criteria, we identified 10 in-demand jobs globally that are relevant in today's economy and accessible to those seeking employment, as well as three horizontal skills that are widely in demand that we've formed into learning paths available via LinkedIn Learning, giving individuals and governments a compass for where to begin.

What about frontline jobs?

We are hoping to help equip people with skills for the digital future, which are becoming increasingly core to any job today. This means technical roles like Software Developer, but also Customer Service or Sales jobs that are heavily reliant on soft skills while also requiring digital collaboration and software skills to do their jobs well.

Will taking a Learning Path improve a job seeker's chances of securing a job? Do you have any evidence of this?

Our data shows clearly the jobs that are open and the skills employers are looking for when they fill those jobs. By making available learning paths that help people get the skills and - with certifications and certificates - demonstrate they have these skills we believe people will be in a much stronger position. We're backing this up with vital soft skills and other job seeker tools.

What pathway would you recommend to the average worker?

For any professional, a career pivot is dependent on the individual's personal interests and strengths. If you're not sure where to start you might even watch a course within each path to get a sense of if it's something you'd like to spend more time learning. Whether you are a retail associate, flight attendant, or bartender, you have foundational transferable skills in soft skills such as communication, empathy, and leadership. The most natural transitions will be roles that leverage those same skills, which might be a customer service specialist or sales development rep.

Do I need a LinkedIn account to access the free learning paths?

You do not need an account to view the learning paths- these are visible to all, regardless of if you are a LinkedIn member. However, if you want to download the certificate of learning path completion, you need to have an account.

What languages are the LinkedIn Learning paths available in?

Most of the training, certifications and employability tools are available to millions of people on a global basis in English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese (Simplified). Job seekers comfortable working in one of these languages will be able to access this content through aka.ms/JobSeeker, regardless of where they live.

There is some support for additional languages, including Italian (MS learn content) and Korean (MS certification exams). We are also looking to expand our language reach through the Edge translation app.

How are you connecting job seekers that have the right skills, but not the traditional qualifications or network, with actual companies?

We're piloting a program to allow job seekers without traditional qualifications to learn, assess their skills, and become eligible for an interview with companies that are passionate about closing the skills gap.

LinkedIn Learning

What is LinkedIn Learning?

LinkedIn Learning is an online educational platform that helps people discover and develop business, technology-related, and creative skills through expert-led course videos. With a catalogue of over 16,000 courses, and 60+ new courses released every week, LinkedIn Learning provides high-quality, relevant, and up-to-date courses taught by real-world practitioners, located across the globe. Drawing on insights from millions of members, LinkedIn Learning personalizes course recommendations at scale and surfaces relevant learning content to each employee based on their connections. This international learning library is available in the languages offered as a part of the Learning Paths – English, Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Chinese (simplified) and Brazilian Portuguese.

How much does LinkedIn Learning usually cost?

LinkedIn Learning is available as a Premium subscription and costs \$29.99 USD a month for a monthly subscription, plus taxes, however with our new Skills commitment we are making the 10 free role-based

learning paths and 3 horizontal learning paths across multiple languages (EN, FR, ES, DE, JP, PT-BR, ZH-Hans) free until March 31, 2021.

What courses are available on LinkedIn Learning?

Over 16,000 expert-led, online courses and video tutorials are available on business, technology and creative topics and disciplines.

What happens at the end of this initiative – will LinkedIn Learning cost money again?

Content on LinkedIn Learning will be free through March 31, 2021. After that, it can be accessed, along with all other LinkedIn Learning content by purchasing a LinkedIn Premium subscription.

Microsoft Learn

What is Microsoft Learn?

Microsoft Learn is a free, interactive, hands-on training platform that helps people develop in-demand technical skills related to widely used Microsoft products and services including Azure, Microsoft 365, Power Platform, Microsoft Dynamics, and more.

Microsoft Learn has self-paced learning paths that combine step-by-step trainings, browser-based interactive coding and scripting environments, and task-based achievements to help learners advance their technical skills and prepare for Microsoft Certifications. With over 3.9 million registered accounts, Microsoft Learn offers over 225 learning paths, more than 1000 modules, and is localized in dozens of languages. Microsoft Learn is great for individual users to advance their skills, as well as organizations that want to create curated employee training paths. Trainings are aligned to 39 technical Microsoft Certifications and shows you are keeping pace with today's technical roles and requirements.

How does Microsoft Learn help with career-oriented upskilling?

Whether onboarding new employees, providing tools for managers to promote learning by their team members, or learning in the flow of work, this new product integration will provide a seamless experience to employees who need to quickly skill or reskill to be successful in their roles. Trainings are aligned to 35 Microsoft Certifications and shows you are keeping pace with today's technical roles and requirements.

What courses are available on Microsoft Learn?

We provide role-based training and learning paths for developers, engineers, data scientists, business users, solution architects, and administrators. We also provide role-based training and learning paths for Microsoft Azure, Dynamics 365, Power Platform, and Microsoft 365.

We're working to expand the platform to many other Microsoft products and services.

How much does Microsoft Learn cost?

Microsoft Learn is a completely free, open training platform available to anyone who is interested in learning about Microsoft products.

What is a learning path on Microsoft Learn?

To acquire skills necessary for a new role, we've designed self-guided learning paths that walk you through a collection of modules that are organized around specific roles and technologies. When you complete a learning path, you should gain a new understanding of different aspects of the technology or role you're studying. Everyone comes with a different level of skills, so mapping your skills will enable you to start a learning path at the appropriate level.

What are the differences between learning paths on LinkedIn Learning and Microsoft Learn?

LinkedIn learning paths will help you gain the foundational and role-based skills for in-demand jobs. For each of these ten roles on LinkedIn Learning, job seekers will have access to rich content from LinkedIn Learning's library of collaborative courses, all taught by industry-expert instructors, allowing the job seeker to move through the content with ease and demonstrate their learning with a certificate of completion.

Microsoft Learn has self-paced learning paths to help you advance your technical skills using Microsoft technologies. Access short step-by-step trainings, browser-based interactive coding and scripting environments, and task-based achievements. These learning paths can also help you prepare for an industry-recognized Microsoft Certification aligned to roles, available at a discounted rate for a limited time to validate to employers you have the skills required.

Certifications

What are the benefits of a certification?

Microsoft certifications help validate knowledge and ability required to perform current and future industry job-roles in a modern digital business. They give a professional edge by providing globally recognized, industry-endorsed evidence of skills mastery that demonstrate abilities and willingness to embrace new technologies. They signal a track record of increased productivity, demonstrate business value for organizations, and help companies identify talent with greater simplicity.

What is the difference between a LinkedIn Certificate of Completion and a Microsoft Certification?

After job seekers complete a LinkedIn course or learning path, they receive a certificate of completion which is automatically generated when their learning has been completed. LinkedIn Learning certificates are not accredited, do not validate skill proficiency as a result of taking the course(s), and are not endorsed or recognized by third parties. These certificates of completion are not the same as certifications from third parties that are industry-recognized (for example, Microsoft Certified: Azure Fundamentals), which have more rigorous exams that one must pass in order to validate skill proficiency. Microsoft Certifications are industry-recognized credentials on Microsoft products and technologies that are validated by third parties.

How does the Microsoft Certification discount process work?

We will offer low-cost access to industry-recognized Microsoft Certifications based on exams that demonstrate proficiency in Microsoft technologies. We are making exams for these Microsoft Certifications available at a significantly discounted fee of \$15 available to those who self-attest that their employment has been impacted by COVID-19. This represents a large discount on the price of exams that typically cost more than \$100. We are committed to supporting the integrity of certifications by enabling proctoring safely in an online setting that is accessible from anywhere. The \$15 fee will be paid to and will enable third parties to scale to meet the potential surge in examination resources and will support the integrity of the certification by enabling proctoring via a safe, online setting that is accessible from anywhere.

Who qualifies for a discounted certification exam?

Job seekers who can attest that they have been unemployed or furloughed due to COVID-19 qualify for a discounted certification exam. Self-attestation can be done upon scheduling an [exam available within the offer](#).

Do I need a Microsoft account to access the discounted Microsoft Certification exam?

Yes, you will need to have a Microsoft account to access the discounted Microsoft Certification exam. If you already have a Microsoft Certification, please use the same Microsoft account linked to access the discount.

Do I need a Microsoft Certification profile to access the discounted Microsoft Certification exam?

Yes, you will need a Microsoft Certification profile, using a Microsoft account, to access the discounted exam. If you do not already have a Microsoft Certification profile, you will be prompted to create one when you schedule your exam.

Which certification exams are available at a discount?

Below are the certification exams available at a discount.

Certification name	Certification exam
Microsoft Certified: Azure Fundamentals	Exam AZ-900: Microsoft Azure Fundamentals
Microsoft Certified: Azure Data Fundamentals	Exam DP-900: Microsoft Azure Data Fundamentals
Microsoft Certified: Azure AI Fundamentals	Exam AI-900: Microsoft Azure AI Fundamentals
Microsoft Certified: Power Platform Fundamentals	Exam PL-900: Microsoft Power Platform Fundamentals
Microsoft 365 Certified: Fundamentals	Exam MS-900: Microsoft 365 Fundamentals
Microsoft Certified: Azure Administrator Associate	Exam AZ-104: Microsoft Azure Administrator
Microsoft Certified: Azure Developer Associate	Exam AZ-204: Developing Solutions for Microsoft Azure
Microsoft Certified: Azure Security Engineer Associate	Exam AZ-500: Microsoft Azure Security Technologies
Microsoft Certified: Power Platform App Maker Associate	Exam PL-100: Microsoft Power Platform App Maker
Microsoft 365 Certified: Teams Administrator Associate	Exam MS-700: Managing Microsoft Teams
Microsoft 365 Certified: Security Administrator Associate	Exam MS-500: Microsoft 365 Security Administration
Microsoft 365 Certified: Developer Associate	Exam MS-600: Building Applications and Solutions with Microsoft 365 Core Services
Microsoft Certified: Data Analyst Associate	Exam DA-100: Analyzing Data with Microsoft Power BI

How many certification exams can be taken at the discounted price?

Job seekers may register and appear for one (1) valid Microsoft Certification exam at the discounted price of USD15 per person per the offer's [Terms and Conditions](#).

When can I schedule a discounted exam and when does it need to be taken?

Eligible participants must schedule a discounted exam before December 30, 2021. Exam takers must complete scheduled exam appointments by December 31, 2021.

How do I request for exam accommodations?

To request exam accommodations, please [submit an accommodations request with PSI](#), Microsoft's exam delivery partner, prior to scheduling an exam. PSI will respond to the request within 24-48 business hours.

Where do I schedule an exam?

Discounted certification exams can be scheduled online via the exam page on Microsoft Learn. Click the "Schedule for USD15" button to begin the scheduling process.

Do I have the option to take the scheduled exam in person or online?

Exams available through this offer will only be made available via online proctoring with Microsoft's exam delivery partner, PSI. Before scheduling a discounted exam, be sure you can meet system, protocol, and verification requirements. [Learn more about online proctoring with PSI](#).

I am having trouble scheduling my exam. Where can I get support?

You can get help through the [Microsoft Certification Support Forum](#). To reach a customer support agent, click *Ask a question* at the top of the page and fill out the form. A moderator will respond within one business day.

Which languages are certification exams available in?

Certification exams for this offer are available in seven languages: English, Simplified Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, French, German.

Can I reschedule or cancel my exam appointment?

Yes, but you must do so at least 24 hours prior to your exam appointment. Log in to your [Microsoft Certification dashboard](#) and select the "**Cancel/Reschedule**" button in the **Appointments** section. You will then be redirected to the exam provider's site, PSI, to cancel or reschedule your exam.

Note: If there are appointments available before March 31, 2021, rescheduling for the same exam can be done any time before December 31, 2020. However, if you *cancel* your exam appointment *after* December 31, 2020, you will not be able to schedule an exam again using the discounted offer.

Are there age restrictions on the certification offer?

The exam offer is restricted to adults who are 18 or older. For additional information, see the [Terms and Conditions](#) for this offer.

For nonprofits

How will the nonprofit offering work?

Microsoft will provide financial grants and technical support to Nonprofit organizations to enable our skills initiative for 5 million unemployed workers who need it most. Nonprofits will help localize and tailor learning content, provide training and support teachers and facilitators to help learners complete learning paths and certification, and provide connections to wrap-around supports, coaching, and mentoring.

Are there nonprofit programs you are prioritizing for the grant program? Which nonprofits are eligible?

We are prioritizing grants for this program to nonprofits with a proven track-record of engaging in workforce reskilling and upskilling, that build in wrap-around support for learners, and work to connect program participants with mentorship, coaching and employment opportunities. At launch, we will also focus on funding nonprofit organizations that have wide-reaching presence. We will also provide cash grants to 50 community-based nonprofit organizations that are led by and serve communities of color in the United States.

When and how will the nonprofit grants become available?

Grants will be made as a normal part of our Microsoft Philanthropies grants process.

How much of the philanthropic giving will be actual cash grants vs. donations or discounts?

We will make cash grants of up to \$15 million (US). In addition, we may also make grants of Azure credits, certification exam vouchers and additional skill content and resources.

Can nonprofits and/or workforce agencies purchase Microsoft certification exams at this discounted rate?

No, the discount certification is only available to individuals who have been unemployed, furloughed or otherwise disrupted by COVID-19.

Can non-profits cover the cost of the \$15 certifications for nonprofit beneficiaries?

Yes, nonprofits can cover the cost of the Microsoft certification fee. The individual job seeker will need to pay upfront when registering for the certification exam and nonprofits can reimburse job seekers using their systems.

Government call to action and public policy advocacy

What is the policy call to action for governments?

In addition to sharing useful data with governments we will use our voice to speak out on public policy issues that will be critical to drive and advocate for systems change and legislative priorities to support employees and job seekers to skill, reskill, and upskill for roles in the post-COVID-19 economy.

What policy is Microsoft advocating for?

Recovering from the devastating economic impact of COVID-19 and getting people from all walks of life back to work as soon as safely possible will require new investments, approaches, and engagement to support workers and businesses. An effective, lasting response will require coordinated action from government and the private sector. Microsoft and LinkedIn believe there is no time to waste in preparing for this post-COVID-19 economy. Digital transformation has accelerated across all industries and therefore, the post-COVID-19 economy will, in turn, generate many technical and tech-enabled jobs. At the same time, it will exacerbate the digital skills gap facing our nation. Helping individuals gain digital skills and earn in-demand credentials in information technology (IT) can play a significant role in preparing them to succeed in the post-COVID-19 economy and beyond. Ensuring individuals have, and take advantage of, opportunities to gain the digital skills necessary for these jobs must be a major priority within any nation's economic recovery efforts. Specifically, Microsoft and LinkedIn recommend that countries implement the following policies in response to COVID-19.

1. Invest in individuals to attain key technology skills
2. Incentives for employers to hire and upskill
3. Leverage the power of innovation and data

Can you provide any examples of governments following these policy areas?

For investing in individuals, a good example comes from New Zealand, where the government has invested approximately \$1 billion (US) to make vocational training courses free to help people who have lost their jobs retrain and also allow new employees in some essential services to train on the job. In the United States, the Pledge to America's Workers American Workforce Policy Advisory Board is developing proposals focused on investments in learning pathways, skills-based hiring, and the modernization of education and training to accelerate reskilling and facilitate innovation in workforce development.

Meanwhile for employers, the approach in Canada is worth recognizing. Workers are encouraged to develop individual training plans ranging from upgrading skills in current jobs to preparing for promotions and even training for jobs outside the company. Workers remain employed – helping retain aggregate demand in hard-hit communities – and acquire new skills, while employers can retain staff and avoid having to train new workers when markets pick up.

Finally, a good example of governments leveraging the power of innovation and data can be found with the [Europass](#) under the European Commission's "New Skills Agenda for Europe". The Europass offers people better tools to present their skills and obtain useful real-time information on skills needs and trends which can help with career and learning choices by working with other services across the labor and education and training systems to allow an easier exchange of information and data.

Does the government have to qualify users as being unemployed before they can access this learning content?

No, the majority of content will be available universally to all job seekers in several languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Japanese and Portuguese. Only those who wish to do exams for the certifications for the Microsoft's products and technologies on Microsoft Learn will have to self-attest that they have been unemployed, furloughed or otherwise disrupted by COVID-19 to receive the discount (cost per exam is US\$15).

How do you recommend government and policy makers use these free resources?

We encourage government entities to:

Promote our 10 free learning paths in four languages for the most in-demand jobs right now, as well as our 3 learning paths covering in-demand soft skills and digital transformation, to your citizens. Post them on your website, email your unemployed and let your career counselors know – these are available to all.

Team with your higher education institutions. Partner with your higher education institutions to weave this into existing curriculums.

Use our insights to guide your workforce development strategy. Understand what skills to focus on, depending on the jobs in your area.

How should governments and policy makers use the Economic Graph insights from LinkedIn?

The LinkedIn Economic Graph is a digital representation of the global economy based on over 690 million members, 50 million companies, millions of open jobs, 36,000 defined skills and 90,000 schools. Through these insights we can help spot trends like in-demand skills, emerging jobs, and hiring rates and help governments and other workforce organizations create make timely and impactful decisions toward an inclusive economic recovery.

Can you give an example of how a government entity has used LinkedIn to drive citizen outcomes?

In 2017, the Province of Ontario invested in 1 million LinkedIn Learning licenses for every student, staff and faculty member in their higher education program. Their results were staggering, with over 4.7 million learning videos viewed, 300,000 citizens viewed courses, and a breadth of in-demand skills learned to help students land their dream job right out of college.

Another great example is the Colombian National Learning Service tapping LinkedIn to close skill gaps, giving over 500,000 workers unlimited LinkedIn Learning access. In the last 3 months alone, the students completed 1.5M courses and 10 teachers completed 10+ hours of courses on the platform.