



MICRO BUT MIGHTY

Micro-Credentials for
a Recovering
Hospitality and Food
Service Sector



Hospitality Workers Training Centre

IN THIS ISSUE

- ➔ What are micro-credentials and e-badges?
- ➔ Why are they gaining importance now more than ever?
- ➔ How can they serve employers and workers alike?

Ontario's hospitality and food service sector has been devastated by the impacts of COVID-19 and is proving to be one of the slowest spheres of the labour market to recover. According to a recent report by BluePrint, 49% of hospitality workers, including those employed in accommodations, food services, and tourism who were displaced at the start of the pandemic, remain unemployed.ⁱ Full recovery to pre-pandemic levels, meanwhile, is not expected until 2023 in even the most optimistic scenarios.ⁱⁱ Like almost every other sector of our economy, hospitality employers and workers alike need faster, better, and more reliable means of recognizing and connecting with each other as we move toward recovery.

During periods of such workforce disruptions, demand-driven, timely, and sector-focused re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities can demonstrably improve workforce outcomes for our industry's most impacted workers, as well as their employers.ⁱⁱⁱ

We at the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC) seek to support recovery by working with industry partners to develop and launch a series of training and skill recognition opportunities for workers in the form of sector-specific, in-demand micro-credentials.



RESKILLING

When a person is building a different skill or set of skills to be able to perform in a different or significantly evolving role.

V
S



UPSILLING

When a person is building a higher level of competency in a skill or set of skills to better perform in their current role.



From Micro-Credentials to E-Badges, in Short

Micro-credentials represent the certification of a wide range of skills, experiences, and achievements gained through short learning programs and/or validated through targeted assessments. They represent reliable proof of a targeted set of skills and knowledge, responsive to strong evidence of industry, employers, or community needs.

Achieved through targeted micro-training opportunities that generally require less than sixty hours of learning, micro-credentials are most often issued in the form of e-badges.

E-badges, in turn represent electronic evidence of learning or demonstrated achievement that is focused on a discrete set of competencies (i.e., skills, knowledge, attributes). Digital badges have embedded metadata that provides richer validation of qualifications. Each e-badge includes information about who received it, the criteria applied to earning it, evidence the criteria have been fulfilled, when the badge was earned, and who issued it.

The concept of “micro-credentialing” is growing in popularity, but it is still a relatively new concept for workers and employers. A survey by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario[i] showed that over 59% of respondents representing organizations and employers and 19% of workers were not familiar with the term at all.

Most Ontario employers, however, saw the value of training opportunities like micro-credentials, and 78% of workers said that it was important for “future-proofing” their careers.[ii]



KEY FEATURES OF MICRO-CREDENTIALING

PROGRAMS:

Short - Take less time to complete than a certificate, degree, or diploma.

Personalized - Based on your interests and career goals while specific to skills and competencies you would like to learn.

Flexible - Can be completed on your own time online, in person, or in a hybrid or on-the-job format.

Relevant - Reflective of employers' most current needs.

Verifiable - Industry-recognized and trusted by stakeholders including employers, industry representatives, and the local community.

Performance-based - Awarded based on demonstrated knowledge or application of skill.

Stackable - Can be combined into a larger credential or qualification as well as potentially providing a pathway to different credentials, both credit and non-credit.

Micro-Credentials for Employment



For those looking to enter or re-enter a rapidly-evolving labour market, micro-credentials can be of critical value toward building resilience and a competitive edge. For job seekers and those planning to advance in their careers, micro-credentials represent accessible and cost-effective ways to rapidly, build up skills and demonstrate transferable competencies.

Industry-recognized, demand-driven micro-credentials can:

- ➔ Enhance an individual's competitive positioning for evolving occupations and emerging career pathways.
- ➔ Offer development opportunities that require less time and human capital than a degree or diploma while providing timely, sector-specific skills.
- ➔ Provide a means to validate and highlight practical experience for those who have professional experience within a particular area, but no formal qualifications.

Micro-Credentials for Business



For employers looking to engage and retain a skilled and agile workforce that will help their businesses navigate shifting market opportunities, trusted e-badges can help:

- ➔ Identify and verify relevant skills in candidates during recruitment and hiring.
- ➔ Address skills gaps quickly in their incumbent workforce through short and agile training opportunities.
- ➔ Support retention strategies by ensuring ready access to reskilling and upskilling opportunities.

“

Micro-Credentials once established, can be a valuable add on for folks who are applying for roles. It would help for those who did not have formal training, like educational training

Hiring Hotel Employer Partner

”

Micro-Credentials with a Purpose

Micro-credentials are not new. Over the past two decades, across the higher education as well as professional training and development fields, micro-credential programming has evolved into an effective and efficient means of capturing individuals' skills gains from formal and informal learnings, as well as their professional experiences. Learnings to date suggest that the most effective micro-credential frameworks are evidence-based and developed in collaboration with local sector employers in response to emerging needs.

Ultimately, providing “training through micro-credentials as part of a career pathway can support skill development and advancement [...] based on industry trends and operations in a way that enhances productivity, retention, skills, credentials, professionalization, and wages of the workforce across an industry.” These insights from the United Way, Toronto Region Board of Trade, and Metcalf Foundations are also echoed in the recommendations from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), the Institute for Public Policy and Economy, and in observations across OECD jurisdictions. Building on these insights, workforce development intermediaries like the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC) can play a critical role in:

- ➔ Raising public awareness of micro-credentials and their value to employers and employees alike.
- ➔ Designing and calibrating micro-credentials for optimal validity and reliability.
- ➔ Delivering tailored micro-training opportunities that are responsive to specified upskilling and reskilling needs.



MICRO, BUT MIGHTY: A Micro-Credentialing Project at HWTC



At HWTC, we are working alongside our partners at Bow Valley College to develop and launch a responsive catalogue of 22-25 credentials to support hospitality employers and job seekers through the sector's COVID recovery.

Through in-depth conversations with more than a hundred hospitality and food service employers and sector stakeholders, we are identifying key soft and technical skills that can be signalled through micro-credentials, and which can help employers more readily identify and onboard qualified candidates.

To meet the demands of a skilled and agile workforce, our "Micro but Mighty" project's ultimate goal is to help demonstrate and establish sector-focused e-badging as a reliable, meaningful, and recognizable tool across Ontario's hospitality and food service sector.

Stay tuned for the next installment in our Monograph series to learn more about our frontline conversations on micro-credentialing with our employer partners, our latest micro-training opportunities, and our strategic vision for enriching Ontario's micro-credentialing system.



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About Us



The Hospitality Workers Training Centre is a not-for-profit, sector-specific workforce development organization focused on supporting a strong and healthy hospitality industry in Ontario, Canada.

Started in 2004, HWTC provides career-long learning opportunities for hospitality professionals and capacity-building supports for hospitality employers.

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