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Professional Skills 101: Your Key to Career Success

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What Are Professional Skills?

Professional skills are the personal habits and behaviors that help you succeed at work. They include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, reliability, and adaptability. Employers say you can get hired for your skills, but you keep your job because of how you work with others and handle challenges.

Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) have identified professional skills as the most essential competencies for students to develop when preparing for employment. Unlike conventional advisory boards, BILTs maintain a more active and collaborative partnership between educators and employers, ensuring that training programs align directly with real-world workforce needs.

Industry partners on these BILTs often emphasize that they "hire based on skills, but fire based on behavior," underscoring how professional conduct directly impacts retention and productivity. Several BILT members have also shared that investing in professional skills training helps reduce costly turnover and creates stronger, more adaptable employees.

The shared mission of building a workforce that's not only technically capable but also agile, collaborative, and ready to thrive is very important in today's rapidly evolving job market.

The Workforce Professional Skills course was developed through Maricopa County Community Colleges, with input from local employers and workforce partners who understand that professional and interpersonal skills are just as essential as technical ones in the modern workplace. The program covers five foundational areas:

- Communication and Empathy
- Professionalism and Collaboration
- Initiative
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Self-Directed Learning and Resilience

Programs like the Workforce Professional Skills course are helping close the gap between education and employment by providing equitable access to career development tools that meet learners where they are.

"By combining workforce development with accessible digital learning, we're helping students build the soft and technical skills employers demand," said Dr. Steven R. Gonzales, Chancellor of Maricopa Community Colleges.
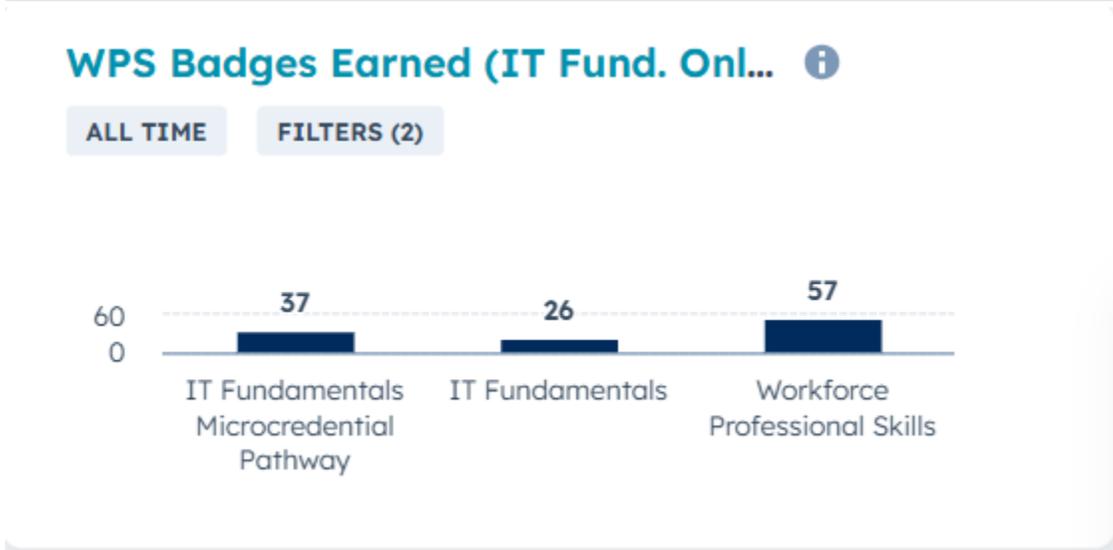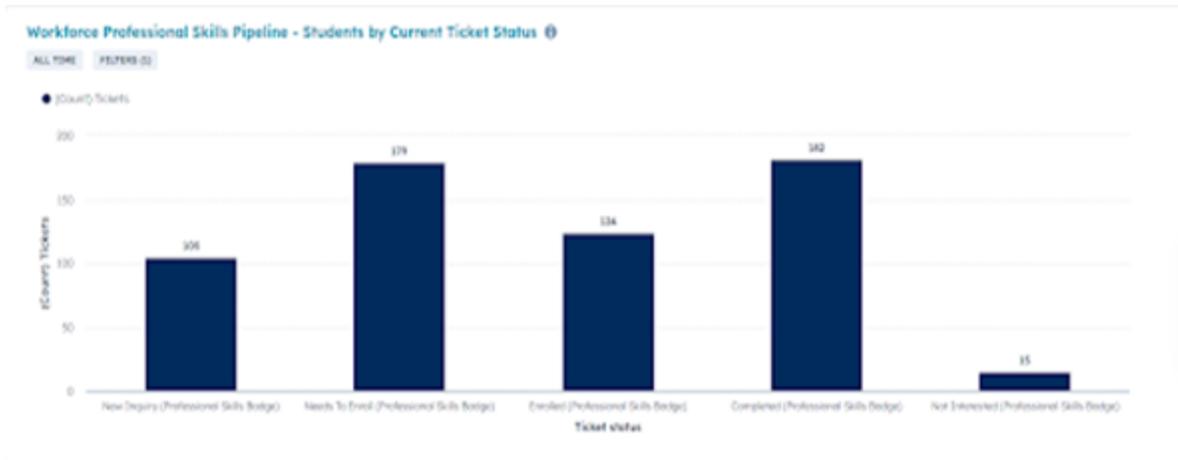
Offered online, on-demand, and at no cost, the course serves as an entry point for residents looking to strengthen their employability and prepare for future career pathways in fields such as IT support, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and software development.

Students who complete the course and pass the final exam with a score of 80% or higher earn the Workforce Professional Skills Badge – a verified digital credential that demonstrates proficiency in the professional skills employers consistently rank as top hiring criteria. This badge can be added to resumes and LinkedIn profiles, showcasing an individual's readiness for the workforce.

Since the program's launch, more than 292 Workforce Professional Skills Badges have been awarded to Maricopa County residents, reflecting strong community engagement and a growing interest in workforce-ready training opportunities.

"It's an effective learning tool that's easy to complete," said one student who asked to remain anonymous. Another student shared, "The course is very helpful for those planning to enter the workforce. It helps learners understand the skills employers are looking for."

By removing barriers to access and aligning training with employer needs, Maricopa County and Maricopa Community Colleges are empowering residents to take meaningful steps toward long-term career success.

Workforce Professional Skills Pipeline - Students by Current Ticket Status ⓘ

ALL TIME   FILTERS (1)

● (Count) Tickets

WPS Badges Earned (IT Fund. Onl... ⓘ

ALL TIME   **FILTERS (2)**

37	26	57
IT Fundamentals Microcredential Pathway	IT Fundamentals	Workforce Professional Skills

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References:

N/A