

Unlocking Hidden Skills: A Universal Learning-Employment Record for Badgistan

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Badgistan's economic crisis, triggered by sudden tariff shocks and disrupted imports, has revealed a deeper structural weakness: the country does not know what it already knows. Skills and competences are scattered across workplaces, schools, communities, and informal networks, but much of this knowledge remains invisible. Training records are trapped in employer LMSs, early jobs are lost to memory, and immigrant qualifications are buried under recognition barriers. At a time when rapid mobilization of talent is critical, Badgistan faces the paradox of abundance without visibility.

Our presentation addressed this challenge by creating a Universal Learning-Employment Record (LER): a regulatory and technical framework that requires all employers and educational institutions, public and private, to issue a verifiable digital credential at the point of employment or enrollment. These credentials are factual attestations of participation — “yes, you worked here,” “yes, you studied here” — rather than judgements of performance. Individuals carry these records in a personal wallet that they control, curating what they wish to publish or suppress while still retaining a lifelong record. The wallet begins in high school, capturing not only jobs but also volunteering, extracurricular activities, and community contributions, embedding a culture of recognition from the earliest stages of learning.

At the heart of this system is a trusted digital identity layer. Rather than relying on corporate emails or fragile employer accounts, every Badgistani receives a unique, government-protected digital identifier (similar to a student ID or social security number) at age 14–16. This ensures continuity across life, protects against data loss, and empowers citizens to manage their identity beyond institutional boundaries. Complementary programs in digital identity literacy help people understand and curate their online recognition footprint.

Aggregated, anonymized data from these records feeds into a national skills observatory, producing real-time heatmaps of competences. Policymakers can see where skills are concentrated, where gaps exist, and where rapid upskilling is required. This enables data-driven responses: shifting resources to regions with shortages, redeploying underused talent, and targeting training for industries hit hardest by the disruption. Stripping identifiers not only protects privacy but also reduces bias in hiring, ensuring fairer opportunities.

The system extends beyond domestic records to include humane recognition for migrants and refugees. Through microcredentials and AI-assisted equivalency mapping,

incoming citizens can bridge into Badgistan's workforce quickly and effectively, avoiding years of underemployment while filling urgent skill gaps.

Impacts:

- For individuals: agency, portability, and equitable recognition of all contributions.
- For organizations: trusted recruitment, workforce development, and streamlined reporting.
- For the nation: mobilization of hidden skills, resilience through evidence-based planning, and a culture of recognition that binds society together.

In short, Badgistan's path to recovery is to become data-driven by freeing the data it already holds. By building a universal recognition ecosystem, one that starts in schools, extends into communities, and recognizes contributions from all, Badgistan transforms crisis into opportunity, creating not just an economy of survival but a society of solidarity.

Keywords: verifiable credentials, skills observatory, skills, learner-employment record