



Google

# Creating Pathways to Careers in IT

The Google IT Support Professional Certificate Impact Report

2019





# Grow with Google

In January 2018, Grow with Google introduced the IT Support Professional Certificate, a program that helps people prepare for entry-level roles in IT support, with no experience or degree necessary. The idea stemmed from our own challenge of finding qualified candidates for open roles in IT support at Google. It soon became clear that this was an industry-wide problem. IT support skills are highly teachable, and a four-year degree isn't typically required to build a successful career in this field. So we created a program that beginners could use to learn the foundations of IT support in under six months. In its first year, more than 50,000 learners enrolled in the program to grow their skills and careers.

In looking back at that first year, we learned a lot about our program's impact. We found that 60% of participants identify as female, Black, Latino, or veterans. Reaching underserved populations was an important goal for us, so we're excited about that progress. We also found that 84% of learners report a career impact within six months, like getting a raise, finding a new job, or starting a new business.

In this report, you'll also meet some of the program completers, like Daniel, Chelsea, and Andrew, who've used their certificates to build careers that they love. Their stories are the driving force behind our work to create economic opportunities for Americans.



Natalie Van Kleef Conley  
Product Lead, Google IT Support Professional Certificate

# Preparing More Americans for Jobs in IT Support

After dropping out of college and moving to Nebraska with his fiancée, Daniel struggled to find a job. He eventually found one as a night security officer at a local community college, but it was not the career in technology he had envisioned. Despite his passion for computers, Daniel lacked the credentials necessary to stand out from other applicants. A friend encouraged him to check out the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. While working nights, he enrolled and got his certificate in five months. Soon after that, Daniel got an email about an open IT job at Central Community College. His Google credentials stood out against other candidates, and he got the role as an IT support specialist. Now married, Daniel is working in a job he loves and that lets him spend more time with his new wife.



**DANIEL**  
Grand Island, Nebraska

Today, stories like Daniel's initial struggle to find work are becoming increasingly common as the accelerated rate of technological change transforms labor markets. High-wage jobs require a high level of education, which is not widely accessible, while low-wage jobs quite often cannot support a comfortable standard of living.

To help middle-skill workers train for occupations in growing fields, one model is emerging where a wide set of players – non-institutional education providers, community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and employers – are creating a new ecosystem that offers learners the tools, training, and job skills that open new pathways to stable employment and economic opportunities for those who need them most.

**215,000+**

There are more than 215,000 unfilled IT support jobs in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>



## THE GOOGLE IT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE

To help create accessible pathways to tech careers, we developed the IT Support Professional Certificate and made it available on Coursera, an online learning platform. **Launched in January 2018, the certificate is designed to help learners, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, go from no experience to entry-level job ready in less than six months** (assuming a five-hour-per-week time commitment). Diversity and inclusiveness are at the program's core. The curriculum includes motivating personal stories from Google employees, including an IT specialist-turned-security engineer from the deaf community, a curriculum developer who is a U.S. Navy veteran, and female executives at the company. The content is taught by Google employees from a range of backgrounds and perspectives who all began their careers in IT support.

The program has no prerequisites, consists of a Google-agnostic online curriculum that includes hands-on assessments, and awards those who complete them with a certificate to signal job readiness. We've worked to directly connect those who complete the program with around 40 top employers, including [Intel](#), [Hulu](#), [GE Digital](#), and [Google](#).



# Understanding Our Impact

MAKES SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CAREERS

84%

of learners report a career impact within 6 months, such as getting a raise, finding a new job, or starting a new business.

REACHES UNDERREPRESENTED LEARNERS

60%

of learners identify as female, Black, Latino, or veteran.

REACHES MIDDLE-SKILL LEARNERS

57%

of learners enrolled do not have a four-year degree.

DRIVES COMPLETION

2.5X

the completion rate of learners taking comparable content on Coursera.



## Our Methodology

To examine the effectiveness of the Google IT Support Professional Certificate in its inaugural year, we worked with Coursera to design an impact study to track learner outcomes from the program, with a particular focus on attracting underrepresented groups and providing an effective pathway to jobs. The impact study was organized around two optional learner surveys that collected data from January 2018, when the IT certificate launched, to March 2019:

- 1 Entry survey: Upon enrollment, all learners received surveys requesting information about their backgrounds and objectives in taking the program. (N=14,953; 21% response rate).
- 2 Post survey: Learners were surveyed six months after completing at least one course in the program and asked to self report any program impact. (N=2,860; 5% response rate).

In the analysis, we focused on U.S. learners only<sup>2</sup> (unless otherwise noted), who represented over 70% of total survey respondents. Responses were collected on the Coursera platform and through email for both surveys.



# Reaching Learners Across the U.S.

## ABOUT OUR LEARNERS

**57%**

do not have a four-year degree  
(vs. 20% Coursera average).

**20%**

are unemployed and seeking work  
(vs. 9% Coursera average).

**74%**

are focused on finding a new job  
(vs. 40% Coursera average).

**38%**

are in the lowest income tertile,  
reporting less than \$30,000 annual  
income (vs. 15% Coursera average).

**50,000**

In its first year, the IT Support Professional Certificate program enrolled more than 50,000 learners looking to transform their careers.

### IT Support Professional Certificate Learners at a Glance

Percent of U.S. learners who:	
Do not have a four-year college degree	57%
Are unemployed and seeking work	20%
Are in the lowest income tertile	38%
Are seeking skills to find a new job	74%
Do not have previous online-course experience	31%
Identify as non-white	50%
Identify as military	9%
Receive financial assistance	17%
Learn via a nonprofit	22%

## DRIVING LEARNER RETENTION

IT Support Professional Certificate completion rates are 2.5X higher than those of comparable content on Coursera. One hypothesis on strong completion rates is that the direct path to employers is a motivator, particularly because the majority of learners are taking the program with the objective of getting a job. The content was also designed to resonate with learners from different backgrounds, and it features machine learning-powered prompts meant to encourage learners through tough assessments.

Diving into specific learner populations, four groups had completion rates that were 2X to 3X higher than those of similar programs on Coursera.<sup>3</sup> These groups include female learners, learners with less formal education, learners who are unemployed but are seeking work, and learners with no work or IT experience.

Learners are also completing the program at a faster rate than anticipated. Initially, we predicted that it would take learners about eight months to complete the certificate, on average, if they were to commit eight to ten hours a week. One year since launch, average time to completion is under six months (150 days), when dedicating five hours per week. As with most online learning programs, the data shows that learners who move through the content over a shorter time frame have higher completion rates.

Once learners finish the program, they gain access to our Completer Community, which features resources like simulated interview practice and a job board. The community is meant to provide resources for any learner who might need extra support with the job search and interview process.

2.5X

Program completion rates are 2.5X higher than those of comparable content on Coursera.

Under  
6 months

The average time to complete the program when dedicating five hours per week.

# Bringing New Possibilities to More People



**CHELSEA**  
Nashville, TN

## *Building a better career for herself and a better life for her daughters*

In early 2018, Chelsea and her young daughters lived in a homeless shelter for three months. “It was the most difficult time I’ve ever faced,” Chelsea said, remembering how she’d reassured her daughters by telling them that they were on a camping trip. Then she took a job as an office manager at Goodwill, where she learned that she could earn the Google IT Support Professional Certificate through the organization. She enrolled and received a scholarship funded by Google.org. Chelsea, who has a GED diploma, said that without tuition support, she wouldn’t have been able to enroll in the program. Today, Chelsea is a technician at Google’s data center in Clarksville, TN – nearly tripling her previous salary. She ensures that hardware and servers at the data center are running efficiently, and she is not only able to provide a new home for her daughters but is now making a sustainable living in a new career.



**ANDREW**  
Paducah, KY

## *A U.S. Army veteran with a new mission*

Andrew spent eight years in the Army as a medical specialist, but around the barracks he was better known as the go-to IT person. So when logistics and costs dimmed his plans for a post-military medical career, Andrew began to think about IT. While searching for options that could give him credentials, Google’s IT Support Professional Certificate caught his eye. The flexibility of being able to do the courses in his free time was very appealing, and he enrolled. The certificate built on his basic networking knowledge but also challenged him with his first exposure to Linux. In six months he completed the certificate and soon had a job as a Level 1 Technician at an IT consultancy in Paducah. Andrew is thrilled to now be the official IT person.

## NEED-BASED SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

Today, there are more than 215,000 unfilled IT support jobs in the U.S. alone, and the occupation is expected to grow faster than average<sup>4</sup> over the next decade.

In order to reach learners with lower education and employment levels in the U.S. — populations that, on average, participate less in online courses but who research suggests benefit substantially<sup>5</sup> — we provided need-based scholarships and financial assistance to 10,000 learners. As part of this commitment, Google.org supported a number of leading nonprofit organizations to increase program access for underserved populations, such as low-income learners, veterans, and refugees.

*Percent of Learners Who Receive Free or Supported Access to the Program*

	Received financial assistance	Took program via nonprofit organization	Compared to overall program
Unemployed and looking for work	30%	26%	20%
Non-white	56%	74%	50%
Female	39%	37%	30%

## NEW SKILLS, NEW GOALS

The IT Support Professional Certificate program has a particular focus on connecting learners to new careers. In fact, 74% of learners who entered the program indicated that landing a new job was one of their goals.

To understand how well the program systematically impacts learners' careers, we surveyed learners about the career benefits that they've experienced.

84% of learners reported that the program had some positive impact on their careers within six months, such as enhancing skills for a current role, improving their ability to find a new job, getting a raise, or even starting a new business.<sup>6</sup>

84%

of learners reported that the program had some positive impact on their careers within six months.



## Looking Ahead

While it's only a year old, the Google IT Support Professional Certificate program has demonstrated its potential to unlock pathways to careers for thousands of learners.

But our work has only just begun. As the program continues, we are committed to equipping learners with the skills, credentials, and networks to achieve their career goals.



## REFERENCES

1. "Summary Demand and Requirements by Occupation," Labor Insight Jobs, Burning Glass Technologies. 2017.
2. While the content was available around the world, financial-assistance recipients and nonprofit-scholarship participants were generally restricted to the U.S.
3. We define similar programs to be those of the same length (five courses) and in the same subject area as the IT Support Professional Certificate program. Completion rates focus on the fraction of learners earning a credential that were enrolled in content for at least 1 year.
4. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Occupational Outlook Handbook, Computer Support Specialists," 2019.
5. Harvard Business Review, "Who's benefiting from MOOCs, and why," 2015.
6. The set of learners surveyed here completed at least one course in the program and were surveyed either on the platform or through email. We are continuing to collect data on learner outcomes and track impact.



# Google

[grow.google/itcert](https://grow.google/itcert)

