

# AI 2030 Launches CRAFT, The First Benchmark Connecting AI Credentials to Responsible AI Workplace Performance

*New benchmark links AI credentials to real-world Responsible AI performance. Organizations are invited to participate and preregister now.*

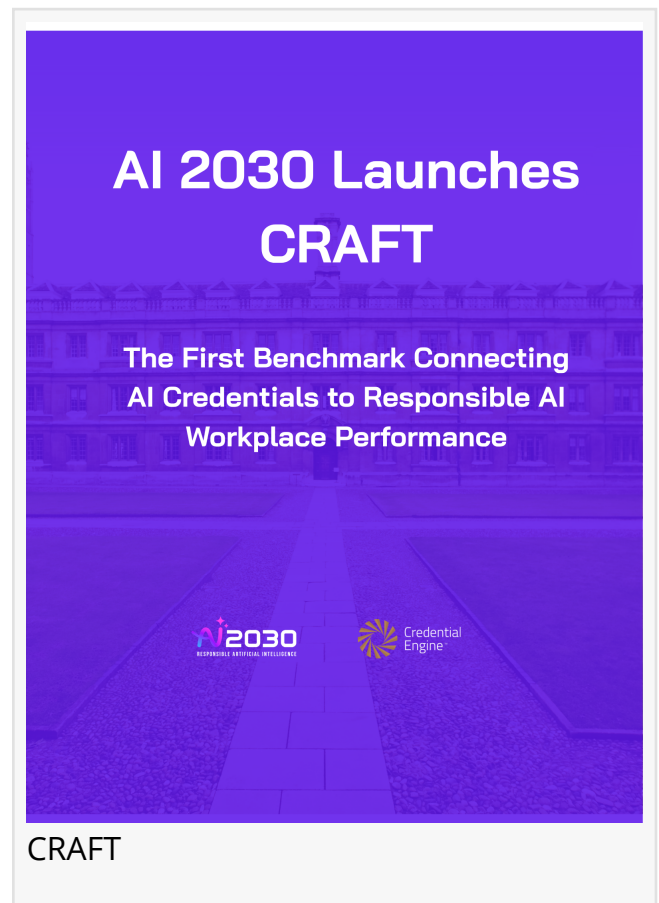
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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- The [AI 2030](#) Institute today announced the launch of [CRAFT](#) (Credentialing Responsible AI for Future-Ready Talent), the first national benchmark initiative designed to identify which AI credentials reliably prepare professionals to practice Responsible AI in the workplace. Modeled on the proven 10-year CHLOE framework for online learning quality, CRAFT is designed for employers, providers, learners, and policymakers across the Responsible AI ecosystem, supporting hiring, upskilling, credential design, and workforce policy decisions. The inaugural CRAFT benchmark uses coordinated surveys of credential providers and employers, combined with labor market intelligence from Lightcast, credential ecosystem data from Credential Engine, and academic program and course platform data from Gray DI, to connect credential and instructional design, hiring and promotion practices, and real-time demand for AI skills.

The credential provider survey is open now; the employer survey opens May 6, 2026. The first national benchmark report is scheduled for release this Fall, 2026.

## The Problem: AI Talent Demand Is Outpacing Verified Workforce Capability

Recent industry research from the PwC 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer shows that workers with advanced AI skills now command a 56% wage premium in the U.S., up from 25% the prior year. The Microsoft and LinkedIn 2025 Work Trend Index reports that 78% of leaders are looking to hire for AI roles, while only 25% of employees have received formal AI training.



AI credentials are expanding rapidly across universities, industry providers, and online platforms, yet employers cannot easily determine which programs develop real workplace capability. Workers and learners risk investing in programs that do not translate into hiring, advancement, or Responsible AI decision-making on the job.

“Organizations are under increasing pressure to demonstrate Responsible AI in practice, not just in policy,” said Xiaochen Zhang, Founder, Executive Director and Chief Responsible AI Officer at AI 2030. “Leaders need to show that their workforce is prepared to design, deploy, and oversee AI systems responsibly.”

### Why CRAFT Matters Now

Organizations are embedding AI across products, operations, and customer experiences — and the pressure to demonstrate responsible workforce capability is growing. The EU AI Act’s AI literacy obligations (Article 4) took effect in February 2025, with broader requirements in August 2026. Organizations must demonstrate that staff involved in AI use and deployment have adequate literacy.

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Which AI credentials actually translate into workforce capability? CRAFT provides the comparative insight organizations need to make those connections with confidence.”

*Tonya B. Amankwatia, PhD,  
Head, AI 2030 Institute and  
CRAFT project lead*

Job postings requiring AI skills have risen 247% since 2023, while the supply of workers with verified AI competencies has grown only 63%. There is no widely accepted way to compare AI credentials or demonstrate that people can direct AI, evaluate outputs, and make responsible decisions in real settings.

“Decision-makers are asking a practical question: which AI credentials actually translate into workforce capability,” said Tonya B. Amankwatia, PhD, Head, AI 2030 Institute and CRAFT project lead. “Skills-based hiring is accelerating, and credentials need to signal real competency — not just course completion. CRAFT provides the comparative

insight organizations need to make those connections with confidence.”

### How CRAFT Works

While 88% of organizations now use AI in at least one business function, approximately one-third

**Credentialing Responsible AI for Future-Ready Talent**  
CRAFT 2026 Provider & Employer Surveys

**Advisory Board**

- Lydia Epps**, *Milken Institute Leadership Development Consultants*: Executive Leadership coach helping human capital and culture teams to responsible AI.
- Robert Bajor**, *Advisory Board, T3 / Microcredential Multiverse*: Microcredential expert, executive and teaching alternative credentials and employment pathways.
- Ellen D. Wagner, Ph.D.**, *Advisory Board, North Coast EduVista*: EdTech researcher, analyst, and educational learning analytics, standards, and emerging technologies.
- Mohan Yang, Ph.D.**, *Advisory Board, Texas A&M*: HTED faculty, lifelong workforce training, transfer of learning, emerging tech, and educational design.
- Nikhil Ambha**, *Advisory Board, Mozilla / IEEE*: Applied AI research lead, IEEE RAISE Chair, multimodal AI and responsible AI advocate.
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- Scott Anderson**, *Advisory Board, Proctor*: Chief of Research & Policy Strategy, enterprise change management perspective to AI capability.
- John Thomas Foxworthy**, *Advisory Board, OLC*: Data science and AI consultant in consulting to create AI strategic implementation roadmap.
- Gabriel Millien**, *Advisory Board, Future Research*: Enterprise AI execution architect helping Fortune 500 close the gap between AI investment and results.

**Research Design Leadership**

- Alvin Chin, Ph.D.**, *Design Team, OLC / IEEE*: AI/ML, research and EdTech business faculty bridging technical AI capabilities, ethics, and leadership.
- Bryan Alexander, Ph.D.**, *Design Team, Georgetown University*: Higher-ed focused and teacher bringing science and long-term social learning to CRAFT.
- Jeanne Kitchens**, *Design Team, Credentialing Experts + 13*: Chief Technology Services Officer ensuring alignment with open credential data standards.
- Julie Uranis, Ph.D.**, *Design Team, UPECA*: Senior VP for Online and Strategic Initiatives connecting professional and job skill requirements.
- Ugur Ozer**, *Design Team, OLC Capital*: AI strategy and data governance leader in financial services anchoring risk and compliance frameworks.
- Bob Hieronymus**, *Design Team, Lightcast*: VP for Partnerships, expanding labor market insight use in education and public sector.
- Dylan Barth, Ph.D.**, *Design Team, OLC*: VP for Innovation and Programs at the Online Learning Consortium.
- Josh Wright**, *Design Team, Lightcast*: Head of Strategy and Partnerships helping partners tell better marketing and revenue enablement stories.
- Mark Koveleski**, *Design Team, OLC AI*: Research and partnerships leader focused on data ethics, program metrics, and evidence standards.
- Xiaoyan Ma, Ph.D.**, *Design Team, Virginia Tech*: Responsible AI and institutional design researcher strengthening service design and equity.

**CRAFT AI 2030 Leads**

- Tonya Amankwatia, Ph.D.**, *AI 2030 Institute*: Founding CEO, former executive vice president, responsible AI and workforce development.
- Ana Petras**, *AI 2030 Institute*: Senior manager career and talent innovation, skills-based credential in organizations.
- Anastasia "Tracy" Rassis**, *AI 2030 Institute*: Executive and program and innovation strategy, responsible AI, program and implementation.

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AI 2030 Institute

### AI Institute Advisors

reporting that their companies have begun to scale their AI programs, according to a McKinsey 2025 State of AI report. CRAFT is designed to help close this gap by focusing on how workforce capability is developed and applied.

CRAFT connects:

Provider credential and instructional design — how credentials are structured and what evidence providers offer about intended learner outcomes.

Learner competency progression – how enrollment, completion, and assessment practices are intended to develop and demonstrate Responsible AI skills and behaviors.

Employer hiring and performance – how job requirements align with credentials and how observed on-the-job Responsible AI behaviors relate to program completion and use of credentials in hiring, upskilling, retooling, and promotion.

Survey findings are further contextualized with labor-market data on AI job postings and skills demand from partners such as Lightcast, providing a “market reality” check on what employers are actually seeking. CRAFT also highlights Green AI practices, supporting leaders who must manage the energy and sustainability implications of scaling AI systems.

#### Expected Impact and Participation

For companies, CRAFT is designed to provide clearer hiring and promotion signals, strengthen AI governance programs by linking workforce development to recognized Responsible AI principles, and reduce risk in selecting training vendors and academic partners through an independent view of credential quality by providing independent, evidence-based signals about credential design and workforce outcomes. According to the AWS-Gallup Global Digital Skills Study, workers with demonstrated AI proficiency earn 18% more than peers in comparable roles, yet AI certifications vary widely in rigor and employer recognition, leaving workers vulnerable to investing time and tuition in programs that don't translate to hiring or promotion outcomes. CRAFT aims to make it easier to identify credentials more likely to be recognized by employers, decrease the risk of investing in low-impact programs, and support more equitable access to high-quality AI learning and retooling pathways.

#### Call to Action: Participate in the Inaugural Survey

Sign up today. Click here to get started: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SignUpCRAFT>.

Request your survey link and designate a single point of contact to coordinate responses.

Participating organizations will receive the inaugural benchmark report before public release and opportunities for visibility in benchmark publications and at convenings as CRAFT evolves.

Continue the conversation at [Chicago AI Week](#), June 24–26, 2026, where we will dive deeper into AI workforce readiness and Responsible AI capability.

For more information about the inaugural cohort, email [research@ai2030.org](mailto:research@ai2030.org) with the subject

line "CRAFT Survey Participation."

## About AI 2030 Institute

AI 2030 Institute is the workforce development engine of the AI 2030 movement—a global 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving more than 6,000 community members across 60+ countries. Operating at the intersection of responsible AI leadership development, research on the future of learning and work, and workforce transformation, the Institute advances a six-pillar Responsible AI framework spanning Security & Safety, Privacy, Accountability, Transparency, Fairness, and Sustainability. For more information, visit [www.ai2030.org](http://www.ai2030.org).

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