Frequently Asked Questions
for Prospective Partners

1. What is the Bridge Academy?

The Bridge Academy has been launched in a number of countries globally. The academies are hosted by partners in each location that engage local employers, leverage local NGO's, recruit students, deliver the program and oversee the results. The global Bridge to Oppornity team provide best practices and advice to the program partners to maximize their impact and leverage the insights of all other preceding programs.

2. How is the history? How was it started?

The program was first developed in partnership with a global IT company that had challenges finding qualified talent. The program has evolved over the last 5 years based on the best practices and lessons learned from each program. As a result, each subsequent program leverages best practices from every preceding program. Our continuous improvement through this process has contributed to our strong results.

3. What are the goals? What are you trying to achieve?

We have only one primary goal: to enable employment of people with disabilities. We do not seek fame and fortune. Our reward is seeing deserving people with disabilities gaining meaningful jobs and careers that transform their life.

We find that too often capable people with disabilities that are not considered for the many meaningful IT jobs because they lack the education and work experience for these roles. Employers struggle to find qualified talent while millions of people with disabilities are unable to secure employment. We held enable the extraordinariness of people with disabilities by providing IT training that leads to a globally recognized certification that is recognized by employers as a qualification for many entry level IT jobs. Our mission is to enable employment of people with disabilities and unlock their full potential and extraordinary talent.

4. Where are the programs today?

We have set up programs with our partners in a number of locations in the United States, Europe, and Africa. We are working with partners now to launch new programs in the US, Africa and Europe. We are always seeking expansion to new markets. Any organizations interested in working with us can email **promzek@bridgetoopportunity.org** to find out more or explore new locations.

5. What is the Program Curriculum?

There are two program curriculums that our partners offer generally. We are also exploring new programs in the future aligned with our employer partners talent needs.

The typical **foundations program** develops foundational IT skills and leads to a certification typically as a **Cisco Certified Technician (CCT)**. The foundational program is typically 20 weeks in duration.

The typical **advanced program** develops analytical skills and typically leads to a certification as a **Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA),** often with additional training credentials in cyber-security. This more advanced program is typically 40 weeks in duration.

Following the certification exams, we typically encourage student internships or apprenticeships in an IT role. Graduates will leave the academy with globally certified IT skills that enable them to find jobs in the industry.

6. What jobs does the program prepare candidates for?

The students who complete the full more advanced program aspire to pass the certification as a *Cisco Certified Network Associate* (CCNA), with a training credential in cybersecurity. They are qualified for Network Security Analyst, Information Security Analyst, Cyber Security Analyst roles, or other entry level IT roles

Students who complete the foundational program aspire to become *Cisco Certified Technician (CCT)* certification. Which will enable them for IT Technician jobs.

7. Are internships at the end of the program assured? Are they paid positions? If so, by whom?

With our program partners, we try to arrange internships or apprenticeships for all our candidates after they graduate, and pass their certification exam. However, these internships are not guaranteed. Most of our certified graduates secure internships after graduation either on own or arranged by the program team. In fact, historically 96% of our certified graduates secure an internship. Internships are typically paid at near full pay for 3 to 4 months. The salaries for these jobs are paid for by the employer.

8. What kind of results has this program achieved?

To date, we have had over 25 cohorts of graduates worldwide and over 350 graduates. Additionally there are over 400 planned graduates from our programs in 2022 and early 2023. Overall, we have had 94% of the enrolled students graduate from the program. 92% of graduates pass their certification exam. 96% of certified graduates secure an initial IT job either as a full time-permanent employee or an intern / apprentice.

The program is based on the Three Talents Bridge to Opportunity model that has achieved strong results with multiple cohorts in several global locations. These previous programmes have over 200 students and another 200+ are currently enrolled in a programme. Graduation and employment rates are typically 90%.

9. Who forms the partnership of the IT Bridge Academy?

The Bridge Academy is a unique collaboration between public and private partners. In each location our global team along with a program orchestrator develops a unique ecosystem that includes a delivery partner, employers, government groups, non-government entities

(NGO's) and disability advocacy organisations. Our global team works with these partners to organize and launch the program leveraging our global best practices.

10. What kind of partnerships are available?

We engage a variety of partners into a unique ecosystem in each community where we provide a Bridge to Opportunity Program. The partners and this ecosystem are critical to our success and a foundation of our program.

All partners benefit from our program. Partnership opportunities are typically created in the following areas:

- **Orchestrators:** organizing partners who create a local community ecosystem, operate the program, oversee delivery (even if they do not do the training themselves), facilitate employer partners, secure funding, and engage community groups.

- **Operators or Deliver Partners:** typically provide the actual training and deliver the training program. They are typically engaged by the orchestrator or organizing partner in the community.

- **Government Agencies and Groups:** we find Government groups and various agencies are deeply committed to our mission to enable employment of people with disabilities. They are typically engaged by the orchestrator or organizing partner in the community.

  Government groups benefit from this program by meeting their mission to expand the labour pool, create employment opportunities for the marginalized, and, transform benefit recipients into taxpayers.

- **Employer Partners:** employers are critical to our ecosystem as our primary goal is employment of our candidates. Employers are typically engaged from the onset of the program in each community, enrich the program throughout, and enable internship or job opportunities for the candidates upon graduation and certification.

  Employers benefit by building their brand, enhancing their productivity, expanding the diversity of their workforce, and They are typically engaged by the orchestrator or organizing partner in the community.

- **Advocacy Partners:** advocacy partners are non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that are focused on advocacy people with disabilities. We engage advocacy partners at the onset of our programs to help identify and recruit candidates, enrich the training, facilitate community awareness and help engage other major community or employer partners. They are typically engaged by the orchestrator or organizing partner in the community.

  Advocacy partners benefit from this program by meeting their mission to help the marginalized, expand the community workforce, grow economic empowerment of people with disabilities in the community, increase employment, expand diversity, and transform lives.

11. What possible roles can employment partners play to support the IT Bridge Academy?

Partners play a critical role throughout the program. We seek to engage employment partners from the very beginning of the training so they can participate in and enrich the training throughout.

We ask partners to participate as "guest lecturers", host site visits for the students to their facility, offer mentor volunteer and participate as interested in our advisory or steering committee.

The goal of this program is **full employment**. Employment partners are critical to our success as we offer students three-months internships at the end of the course, so they leave with work experience. We will work with employment partners to design suitable internships that match the employers and the student's expectations.

12. As an employer, what do I gain from participating in this partnership?

As an employer, you are joining a unique partnership between international and national partners, the private and the public sector. You will have access to a pool of talents equipped with in-demand IT and computer skills. Through this partnership, you will have the opportunity to become a more disability-confident and inclusive employer. You will be able to work with and recruit young and talented students with disabilities who are ambitious to build careers in the IT sector.

13. What would be the next steps, for interested partners?

If you are interested in joining the partnership, please contact Patrick Romzek (promzek@bridgetoopportunity.org) We will arrange direct dialogue with you about program locations and partnership opportunities.

14. Does the program focus on one primary disability?

No, we do not focus on only one disability. We welcome students with all disabilities into our programs, and provide the necessary reasonable accommodations based on their impairment.

15. Are the students trained to work only on specific equipment?

No, we train the students to develop general IT skills, as well as expertise in digital literacy, networking, and cybersecurity. Our training is independent of the technology platform and adaptable to technology from multiple vendors and relevant to most employers.

16. What comes next for the program?

We are incredibly proud to have this program and the success we have seen with many of our students. In the short-term, we expect to continue to support the graduation, certification and employment of our students.

Meanwhile, we continue to enhance the program to continue to increase our impact. For example, we recently published our best practice guide for our partners and launched a monthly webinar of guest speakers and relevant skills development for our students and graduates.

In the longer term we intend to continue to expand our program in new locations. We expect to expand our partners and expand the program locations with our current partners.

Want to learn more?

Visit our website at **bridgetoopportunity.org**

Email Patrick Romzek, our founder, at **promzek@bridgetoopportunity.org**