CompTIAtech
CAREER ACADEMY

A border community's game-changing program launches IT careers

MISSION, TEXAS was originally founded by entrepreneurs. In 2017, enlightened government leaders rejuvenated this entrepreneurial spirit by creating a program to build a certified IT workforce. Forty unemployed and underemployed individuals participated in fully-funded, rigorous IT training. Graduates have found high-quality IT employment, and Mission, TX is filling the IT skills gap for large and small local businesses.

Mission, TX is a population of modest economic background, so providing fully-funded IT training, with no direct cost to the student, was critical to the program's success. In early 2017, the Mission Economic Development Corporation (EDC) formed a strategic partnership with CompTIA Tech Career Academy, a nonprofit subsidiary of Creating IT Futures Foundation, a 501(c)3 charitable organization. These organizations collaborated to develop a unique IT talent pool of minorities, ready to fill job roles, so desperately needed, to close the IT skills gap. Now Mission, TX is able to strategically attract, grow and retain financially vibrant businesses in the local community.

"This bootcamp is focused on filling a need in professional certification of IT workers in cybersecurity. The demand for certified workers encompasses all industries in IT departments and companies that provide IT services to businesses both large and small," *said Alex Meade, Mission EDC CEO.*

THE CHALLENGES

Like most communities along the US/Mexico border, Mission, Texas, which is located in the Rio Grande Valley has:

- sizable unemployed and underemployed populations, consisting primarily of minorities;
- challenges attracting new, larger employers into the community;
- and employers seeking to fill their IT skills gaps, especially regarding cybersecurity.

A CompTIA Tech analysis found that employers across Texas posted job openings for 38,190 core IT positions in Q4 2017; and for more than 165,479 tech jobs in 2017.

THE SOLUTION

In early 2017, the Mission Economic Development Corporation (EDC) formed a strategic partnership with CompTIA Tech, a non-profit subsidiary of Creating IT Futures Foundation. These organizations collaborated to design a comprehensive program to recruit, train and place unemployed and underemployed individuals in higher-paying IT careers, with a focus on cybersecurity. By providing a trained IT pipeline, Mission EDC would be well-poised to attract, grow and retain leading-edge businesses requiring IT security skills.

Workforce Solutions and Mission EDC conducted successful recruitment outreach to thousands of local individuals, with a demographic focus on minorities and women. Several hundred people entered the screening phase, during which CompTIA Tech conducted an assessment of each applicant's IT knowledge base. After thorough vetting, 40 participants met the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's basic eligibility requirements and were admitted to the IT training program.

Designing a Custom IT Training Solution: After assessing the 40 students' IT knowledge base, CompTIA Tech designed a custom, high-quality assessment, training and certifications solution, meeting Mission EDC's timing, operational logistics and budget. With 20 years as the leading provider of IT certifications and a non-profit status, CompTIA Tech consistently provides superlative training that is cost effective compared to for-profit training solutions.

Delivering High-Quality Training: During the rigorous, accelerated 8-week program, CompTIA Tech delivered on-site, best-in-class training, tailored to meet diverse learning preferences of the students. CompTIA Tech also provided learning content; instructor-guided labs for complete immersion; and, CertMaster, a test prep software.

THE RESULTS

Upon completing the comprehensive training program, the 40 participants were offered, and some validated, their IT knowledge by earning several CompTIA certifications: A+, Network+, Security+ and Cybersecurity Analyst+. CompTIA's vendor-neutral skills certifications are employer-driven. Job roles are the cornerstone of our IT certifications. Many employers rely on certifications as a screening or hiring criteria during recruitment.

- **100 percent** of students completing the Mission, TX, training program earned their A+ and Network+ certifications.
- These graduates were certified to work and fill the growing need in Mission, TX for a robust IT talent pipeline.
- Mission, TX has strategically attracted and retained financially vibrant businesses in the local community.

"These programs offered by TWC provide local workforce boards with an opportunity to partner with organizations and foster programs that will provide our local workforce with in-demand skills training that lead to high paying sustainable careers," said Francisco Almaraz, Workforce Solutions CEO.

"This collaboration between Mission EDC and CompTIA Tech Career Academy will benefit both the local community and its workforce," said *Texas Workforce Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez.* "Texas' labor force is the backbone of the Texas economy. It is made up of hard-working individuals who are eager to obtain the skills that our employers need."

CompTIA Tech Career Academy is a nonprofit subsidiary of Creating IT Futures Foundation, a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Creating IT Futures, in turn, is a subsidiary of the nonprofit, international tech trade association, CompTIA, headquartered in Downers Grove, IL. Our mission is to unlock people's potential by helping them launch and grow their careers in information technology. As a nonprofit, we train and prepare adults for certification and success in IT jobs to address an industry shortage of skilled IT professionals, a shortage noted by the National Science Foundation. Our sole motivation is to help students land and thrive in IT jobs in order to grow the tech workforce.

For more information, please visit **CompTIATech.org**