



# Newsletter

Fourth Edition, February 2024

Dear Techforce Community,

**Welcome to the fourth edition of the 21st Century Techforce Newsletter**, which our team creates to share the latest updates of our project with the community. Although the last few months have been full with delightful festivities across the island and year end celebrations, the 21st Century Techforce team has been closing the year with momentum to continue efforts into next year.

We are excited to share the first version of our annual dossier, in which we will share the overall progress made to date across our three main initiatives (K12 Career Lighthouses, Short-form Credentials, and Stackable Credentials), as well as our goals for 2024 which will help us reach our ambition of **transforming Puerto Rico into one of the top 10 states/territories in tech talent**. The dossier will be published this month - stay tuned!

Thank you for all you've done to support the 21st Century Techforce. We look forward to continuing to grow our impact each day with the help of leaders like you.

Sincerely,



**Manuel Cidre**  
Secretary of PR DEDC

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# 21st Century Update

## What is happening in K-12?

**K-12 Career Lighthouse schools have continued to receive cutting-edge materials** that will allow them to start teaching their innovative STEM curricula, focused on topics from computer science to robotics. Four out of nine schools have finished installing all materials that they will use when teaching computer science and related classes this year. Make sure to check out the [strategic plan](#) that the Department of Education will implement this year to train 300+ teachers in the island in Computer Sciences and Applied Technologies - a plan that was built considering our pilot initiative with the current K-12 Career Lighthouse schools.

Additionally, we launched a second round of the survey we are planning to run periodically to track progress and measure students' interest in computer science studies and careers now that the pilot classes have launched.

## What about the short-form credential space?

Short-form credential grant recipients show strong progress in the implementation of the programs they have been designing. **As of end of December the total number of students enrolled across programs was 259.** We also continue to see formidable traction with over 3,400 applicants to the programs so far. Furthermore, we are proud to announce that three of these programs started classes in January, meaning a total of six grantees are providing instruction to students.

## And what's the latest news on stackable credentials?

The stackable credentials universities have **advanced their accreditation process and are now most are working with the Junta de Instituciones Postsecundarias (JIP)** to finalize the validation and accreditation of the programs that have been in design for the past months. Together, they re-designed 11 bachelor's degrees offering 26 credentials amongst them (9 associates and 17 certificates) available next year.

# 21st Century in the News

## Publishing soon: Annual dossier for the 21st Century Techforce

The annual dossier for the overall program will be published this month. This document outlines the in depth progress achieved last year and the upcoming goals for 2024 broken out by initiative. Stay tuned to read it!

**Our goal**  
Become a top 10 state/territory for 21<sup>st</sup> century talent by generating **+50K** additional skilled workers over the next 10 years.

DOE's vision is for Puerto Rico to become a top 10 state/territory for 21<sup>st</sup> century talent by generating about 50,000 additional skilled workers over the next 10 years. So far, DOE has distributed \$20 million to fund 9 K-12 Career Connection Lighthouse pilots across the island, fund 8 institutions to scale their training offerings in Puerto Rico, provide grants and technical assistance to higher education institutions to redesign existing programs and introduce stackable credentials, and design and fund the new employer-workforce concierge usability model (WEPF), which serves as a recruitment and training service for employers looking to locate or expand in Puerto Rico.

K-12 Lighthouses	Short-form Credentials Grant	Stackable Credentials Grant	Employer Workforce Concierge
Better prepare K-12 students for 21st century jobs by providing technical career-focused programs and upskilling teachers	Increase availability and quality of short-form technical credentials	Enabling multiple credentials that combine or accumulate each other to support enterprises	Provide a one-stop-shop for employers to address job market talent needs, including career training and onboarding
Impact	Impact	Impact	Impact (expected)
9 schools	9 providers	6 universities	2-3 companies

## [Ironhack, one of our short form credential providers, featured in El Nuevo Día](#)

El Nuevo Día published an in depth article about Ironhack's arrival to Puerto Rico as part of the 21st Century initiative. Even though the founder and CEO of this company is Boricua, only now did they get the opportunity to come back to Puerto Rico!



# Latest and Upcoming Events

## **Gov Tech Summit Presentation - December 12th**

Our teams shared the progress and objectives of the 21st Century Techforce at the PRITs event where stakeholders from the public and private sector got a chance to learn about the origins and progress of the initiative.



## **Short form Credential Convening – January 30th**

We hosted a convening with all our Short Form Credential grantees to give a space to reflect on their progress, celebrate their accomplishments, and ideate collaborative efforts into the future.

## **School visit to Escuela República de Perú – February 20th**

We have another scheduled visit to one of our K12 pilot schools in San Juan. This is the first time we will see the fully installed materials that were purchased with the grant funds and it is incredibly exciting to think that the students have already started using these in their regular classes.



## **Stackable Cohort Convening - February 23rd**

The Universidad Politécnica is hosting our first Stackable Cohort Convening, scheduled for all stackable grantees to share best practices from the implementation

of their programs as well as to hear insights from programmed private sector representatives from the tech industry.

## Thought Leadership

### AI is transforming education for good

Companies are seeking to integrate AI into what has been a lagging field in terms of innovation in the past: education.

### 2024 workforce predictions

2024 foresees a rise in skills-based training and hiring, enhanced industry-education partnerships, and a focus on technological skills like AI, indicating a shift towards a more adaptable, skill-oriented workforce

### 2024 National Educational Tech Plan

The 2024 NETP addresses three key divides: Digital Use, Design, and Access, focusing on enhancing students' technology use in learning, expanding educators' design capacities, and ensuring equitable tech access

## Talent Spotlight



**Jesus Medina**  
from Terminal34

The reason Jesus became interested in technology was his fascination with the ability to solve everyday problems that sometimes seem difficult, but that can be resolved with knowledge and effort. His military status made it challenging for him to complete his degree at a university in Puerto Rico. However, he



**Lizbeth Herger Reguero**  
from Ironhack

Lizbeth, passionate about problem-solving through creativity, decided to boost her career in technology when she realized the importance of digital skills in today's job market, she decided to take a UX/UI course with Ironhack, her motivation is focused on the opportunity to transform ideas into user experiences

was confident that with Terminal34 and the Software Engineering bootcamp, he would acquire the tools necessary to continue his studies and achieve his goal of becoming part of the technology workforce.

and provide a global impact. Lizbeth chose this path to stay at the forefront of the technological revolution and build a future in an ever-evolving field.

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## Follow us



We encourage you to actively engage with us and share your thoughts by emailing us at: [21stcentury@ddec.pr.gov](mailto:21stcentury@ddec.pr.gov) or by finding us at the [21st Century Techforce website](#).

## Our Story

In April of 2023, the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DED), jointly with the Department of Education (PRDE) and the private sector in Puerto Rico introduced the visionary “**21st Century Techforce**” program. With a firm commitment to generating over **50,000 skilled workers** and propelling Puerto Rico into the **top 10 territories for 21st century talent**, this initiative is revolutionizing education on the island.

Bolstered by a substantial **grant fund of \$50 million**, the “21st Century Techforce” is committed to three main initiatives that will transform education for young and adult learners. The first one is **K-12 Lighthouse**, focused on innovative curriculum development and teacher training programs at schools; the second one is **Short Form Credentials**, developed to provide short, targeted courses that provide practical and industry-relevant knowledge; and the third one is **Stackable Credentials**, designed to allow individuals to customize their learning journeys and obtain specialized certifications.

The “21st Century Techforce” program is dedicated to improving educational access to all residents, empowering them to pursue their aspirations and shape their own futures.

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DEPARTAMENTO DE  
**DESARROLLO**  
ECONÓMICO Y COMERCIO



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