EQOS Case Study: Building a Platform for Non-Degree Credential Quality Assessment

Challenge: Education Quality Outcomes Standards (EQOS), an independent nonprofit acquired by JFF, developed a framework to evaluate the quality of non-degree credentials (NDCs) based on workers' outcomes, addressing the growing need for reliable credential assessment in the labor market. With a $2.9M grant from the GitLab Foundation, JFF aimed to create a platform and API to enable learners, workers, and employers to assess NDC quality within talent-matching tools. JFF partnered with the Burning Glass Institute (BGI) to develop the data model, while JFFLabs led the platform and API design. The complexity of this multi-stakeholder partnership, combined with the need to align JFF, BGI, and GitLab Foundation expectations, posed significant challenges, requiring robust oversight to ensure cohesive execution and adherence to project milestones.

Strategic Direction: To navigate these challenges, JFF and JFFLabs engaged D. E. Williams + Co. as a technical advisor and project overseer to guide the EQOS platform and API implementation. The collaboration leveraged the Impact Incubation Model to align the efforts of JFF, BGI, and the GitLab Foundation, ensuring a unified approach to project goals. The strategy focused on strengthening the JFF-BGI partnership, optimizing EQOS operations, and maintaining transparent communication with the EQOS steering committee and GitLab Foundation to meet funder expectations and deliver a high-quality product.

Acceleration: D. E. Williams + Co. conducted a comprehensive assessment of EQOS operations, identifying inefficiencies in the JFF-BGI collaboration process and recommending targeted improvements to enhance coordination and streamline workflows. They facilitated regular alignment sessions between JFF, BGI, and JFFLabs to ensure clarity on roles, responsibilities, and deliverables. Monthly executive updates were provided to the EQOS steering committee and Managing Director, detailing progress, challenges, and mitigation strategies. These updates fostered accountability and kept all stakeholders aligned with the project's timeline and GitLab Foundation's expectations, paving the way for successful milestone achievement.

Product Development: The collaborative efforts culminated in the successful delivery of the EQOS data model, tailored specifically for technology and healthcare credentials, which provided a robust foundation for assessing NDC quality. JFFLabs launched the EQOS web app and API, enabling seamless integration into talent-matching tools for learners, workers, and employers. The platform and API were designed to be user-friendly and scalable, ensuring broad accessibility and adaptability to future credential types. The project met all of GitLab Foundation's year 1 milestones, demonstrating the effectiveness of the coordinated approach and the Impact Incubation Model in driving product development.

Impact: The partnership between JFF, JFFLabs, BGI, and D. E. Williams + Co. delivered transformative outcomes for EQOS, establishing it as an emerging leader in the credentials market. The successful launch of the EQOS web app and API, underpinned by a robust data model, enhanced the ability of stakeholders to assess NDC quality, fostering greater trust and utility in non-degree credentials. The achievement of year 1 milestones secured an additional $2.1M in funding from the GitLab Foundation for year 2, enabling further expansion and refinement of the platform. By strengthening the JFF-BGI collaboration and aligning stakeholder expectations, the initiative positioned EQOS to drive significant value for learners, workers, and employers in the evolving labor market.