

The Ion and Microsoft Join Forces for Upskilling

The Ion kicks off 2022 with additional partners and new workforce development programs for Houstonians

February 9, 2022 - As part of its commitment to expanding economic opportunities in the Houston community and evolving the region's workforce, [The Ion](#), Houston's innovation hub, is excited to announce the launch of several new workforce development programs. The programs have been created with the support of founding partner Microsoft and are offered in a variety of formats, including boot camps and courses. These initial programs are aimed to enhance participants' digital skills and to prepare for careers in technology. This announcement further signifies the evolution of The Ion's programming and commitment to digital upskilling as part of its work with Microsoft while creating pathways with new collaborators.

"The Ion is collaborating with new and existing organizations to create visible pathways to careers in technology for underrepresented populations and job seekers," said Jan E. Odegard, Executive Director at The Ion. "The Ion is excited to offer low-cost programming that meets learners of all skill sets and financial backgrounds where they are to make a tech-fueled career or career in tech possible."

Starting this month, The Ion, in collaboration with Microsoft, will offer programs aimed to bridge the digital skills gap. This programming includes several workforce development pilots with:

- [General Assembly](#), one of the world's leading sources for training, staffing, and career transitions, which will offer programs that focus on today's critical technology skills and provide instruction in software engineering, user experience design, or data science and analysis. Learners can participate in information sessions, training, and immersive courses, lasting up to five months. To be accepted into the GA program, interested participants must submit a brief application. Tuition assistance is available for individuals selected to participate in the initial cohort of available courses. Applications can be found at <https://learn.generalassemb.ly/ion-houston/>. For more on the specific General Assembly courses offered, visit [here](#).
- [Ampersand](#), which upskills interns for better hiring outcomes and career readiness, will provide learners with digital courses and college students with internships, where they can translate the skills learned through the program into their careers.
- [High Performance Institute](#), which will offer learning management and personal development training services. These services are virtual and include a personal performance indicator assessment and habit builder course, with monthly group coaching sessions for participants. These opportunities enable participants to turn their "high potential into high performance" and optimize their habits for success.

- [The Kino-Eye Center for Visual Innovation](#), which reimagines conventional academics through a convergence of technology, art, and education, will offer both the Microsoft Virtual Innovation Professionals (VIP) and Future Accelerated Skills Training (FAST) workshop series. The VIP series provides the essential skills necessary to create, produce, and implement online events. The FAST series is a workforce development program that provides professional skills, technical training, and certification pathways in digital technology for underemployed/unemployed/displaced workers and students.

"We're seeing a tremendous demand for skilled workers who are ready to join Houston's fast-growing tech economy," said Naria Santa Lucia, Microsoft General Manager for Digital Inclusion and U.S. Community Engagement. "These workforce development programs announced today connect learners with opportunity and employers with the trained workforce they need for long-term sustainability."

"The Ion's workforce programs were created for a variety of learners from beginners in technology to experts looking to upskill and progress in their careers," said Christine Galib, Senior Director of Programs at The Ion. "Expanding our community's access to digital skills is a critical first step in empowering a strong workforce to be well-equipped with the skills needed for today's, and tomorrow's, employment opportunities."

For updates on The Ion's upcoming networking and education events and application information, sign up for The Ion's newsletter [here](#).

About The Ion: The Ion anchors a 16-acre innovation district, the epicenter for Houston's innovation ecosystem, as an inclusive, dynamic, vibrant, and dense hub focusing on quality collaborations between entrepreneurs, incubators, accelerators, corporations, academics, and the Houston community. The 266,000-square-foot building accommodates multiple uses, including class-A office space, shared workspace, prototyping and maker resources, event space, classrooms, food and beverage offerings, as well as indoor/outdoor communal areas with shared amenities. For more information, please visit <https://ionhouston.com/>.

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