ILLUSTRATIVE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BRIEF

Research and Analysis Brief: Should HarborPath Launch an Employer-Sponsored Microcredential Pilot?

FICTIONAL DECISION-SUPPORT EXCERPT · NOT CLIENT WORK · EXECUTIVE STRATEGY

Research and Analysis Brief: Should HarborPath Launch an Employer-Sponsored Microcredential Pilot? **Illustrative sample only.** HarborPath Learning Network, its partners, circumstances, figures, and source descriptions are fictional. This draft demonstrates a DecisivIQ research brief, not findings about a real organization, market, program, or funder.

Executive premise

[HarborPath's leadership is considering a 12-month, employer-sponsored digital operations microcredential in two hypothetical metro areas. The decision is whether it has enough evidence, delivery capacity, and employer alignment to run a bounded pilot now rather than validate the proposition first.]
[The evidence direction is promising but not conclusive. A pilot can be a sensible learning investment if it has a named executive owner, limited exposure, and a small number of operating questions. Scaling first would turn a useful hypothesis into a costly commitment.]
[The decision audience is the CEO and executive team, with board oversight of the investment envelope. The criteria are employer relevance, learner access, delivery feasibility, cash exposure, quality of evidence, and the ability to adjust without weakening core programs.]

Illustrative decision situation

[HarborPath delivers short career-navigation workshops through community partners. Management is weighing three paths: launch a two-city pilot, begin with a one-market employer-backed pilot, or defer delivery for a validation sprint. The two-city design would serve 80 learners, use a contracted curriculum platform, and require an illustrative $ 180,000 allocation, partly recovered through sponsorships.]
[HarborPath has repeat referral relationships, demand signals from workshop attendance, and indications that local employers struggle to fill entry-level operations roles. Yet no employer has made a written sponsorship commitment; the current team has limited work-based learning experience; and attendance does not prove completion or changed hiring behavior.]
[The illustrative evidence synthesis draws on eight hypothetical items: workshop data, referral notes, two labor-market summaries, a peer-program public report, job postings, an internal capacity map, and a draft curriculum outline. These are directional inputs, not independently verified facts.]

Decision-quality observations

01 Demand is plausible; purchase commitment is unproven.
Labor signals and job postings may point to recurring demand. They do not establish that employers will sponsor seats, interview completers, or accept the credential. Management should not mistake a market signal for a buyer decision. The evidence gap is documented employer participation tied to a role profile, cohort size, and specific contribution.

02 Strategic fit is stronger than operating fit.
The pilot extends HarborPath's mission and may benefit from community relationships. Yet it adds work the operating model does not routinely perform: curriculum oversight, learner support, employer coordination, and outcome tracking. Without an end-to-end accountable owner, the pilot becomes an attractive concept with diffuse responsibility.

03 Two cities create breadth but dilute control.
A two-market launch could test portability and diversify partner reliance. It also doubles coordination before HarborPath knows its conversion and completion mechanics. Favor clean learning over maximum visibility.

DECISIVIQ / STRATEGY INTO OPERATING DISCIPLINE

Choose with clarity. Execute with control.

Options and material tradeoffs

Option A: Launch the two-city pilot as framed.
This creates delivery experience quickly and may build momentum. It also commits leadership to two environments before sponsorship and capacity are proven. It is defensible only with written employer participation and an accountable operating lead.

Option B: Run a one-market, employer-backed pilot with stop gates.
This reduces year-one reach but concentrates management attention and makes results easier to interpret. One market may not represent all future conditions. It is the more proportionate route when leadership needs evidence about the model, not activity volume.

Option C: Defer delivery for a validation sprint.
HarborPath could test employer role requirements, enrollment intent, partner capacity, and unit-economics assumptions within 60 to 90 days. This protects cash and avoids premature complexity, but delays service delivery. It is appropriate if sponsors will not commit or an operating lead cannot be assigned.

Recommended action architecture

01 Authorize Option B, conditionally.
Name the Chief Programs Officer as accountable executive and limit the initial cohort to one market and a fixed investment ceiling. Approval should depend on two written employer participation commitments, a confirmed delivery partner, and a baseline learner-support plan. The CEO retains the decision right to pause if those conditions are not met.

02 Set three pre-launch gates and name the validators.
Within 45 days, verify employer role alignment, learner conversion from referral to enrollment, and readiness of the curriculum and support model. The partnerships lead, program director, and finance lead should present evidence against each gate. Their task is not to defend the pilot. It is to show whether the initial hypothesis still holds.

03 Run the pilot as a learning system, not a promotional program.
Track enrollment, attendance, completion, employer engagement, interview activity, cost per learner, and material delivery exceptions. Hold a 30-day operating review and a 90-day executive checkpoint. Decide in advance what evidence supports continuation, redesign, or closure.

Executive questions to test

01 Which employers will make a specific, documented contribution, and what behavior are they committing to beyond informal interest?
02 Can HarborPath deliver learner support, partner coordination, and outcome tracking without weakening existing workshop commitments or creating unowned work?
03 What first-cohort result would justify expansion, require redesign, or cause management to stop?

Professional boundary

This sample reflects strategic planning, secondary-research synthesis, and decision-support materials only. It does not provide legal, tax, accounting, investment, regulatory, procurement, compliance, audit, certification, or government-representation advice. It does not provide opinions, binding instruments, filings, formal submissions, or assurances concerning funding, awards, board adoption, certifications, compliance, or organizational results.

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Engagement snapshot

Offer: Research and Analysis Brief **Price:** $ 595 **Timeline:** 5 business days after receipt of the complete agreed input package.

Scope and deliverables: One defined decision question; focused secondary research using up to 12 credible public or client-provided sources; an evidence synthesis separating supported observations, directional signals, limitations, and unanswered questions; an assumptions and tradeoffs matrix; and executive implications with recommended validation steps and a linked source register. The decision framing statement identifies the audience, criteria, scope limits, and operating context. The analysis brief is typically 5 to 7 pages, excluding its source list.

Not included: Primary research, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, outreach, or stakeholder facilitation; paid databases, paywalled reports, proprietary datasets, or acquisition fees unless separately supplied; independent fact verification; or expansion into a new decision question. One consolidated revision within five calendar days may address clarification, prioritization, or factual corrections based on supplied materials.

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