

Microsoft Equips Individuals With New Training Resources Needed for Jobs



Elevate America initiative provides technology skills tools at no cost and low cost.

REDMOND, Wash., Feb. 22 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Microsoft Corp. today announced a new initiative, Elevate America, which will provide up to 2 million people over the next three years with the technology training needed to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20000822/MSFTLOGO>)

Microsoft has worked for years with other businesses and community-based partners to broaden access to job opportunities through information technology education and training. Elevate America expands these efforts and provides immediate support in response to the current economic crisis in partnership with others in the public and private sector.

Elevate America has two main offerings, one available immediately and one that will be provided in partnership with state governments including those of Florida, New York and Washington.

A new online resource, located at <http://www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica>, is available today. This new Web site helps individuals understand what types of technical skills they need for the jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities of today and tomorrow, and resources to help acquire these skills. The Web site provides access to several Microsoft online training programs, including how to use the Internet, send e-mail and create a resume, as well as more advanced programs on using specific Microsoft applications.

In order to provide a broader range of training programs and certification exams, Microsoft will also partner with state and local governments, which in turn will make these resources available to their citizens. Pamela Passman, corporate vice president of Microsoft Global Corporate Affairs, today announced that Florida, New York and Washington will be the first states to provide Elevate America to their residents. Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire says that programs such as Elevate America are critical to providing support to Washington families and helping the economy recover.

"At the federal, state and local level, leaders are working together to help start the engine of economic growth. The private sector provides much of the spark needed to jump-start that engine," Gregoire said. "Elevate America is a great example of Microsoft's leadership on education and work force development -- issues that bring us a step closer to recovery by helping us provide critically important help to our citizens. Washington state is pleased to be one of the first states to partner with Microsoft to provide Elevate America to our residents."

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist said that the success of the Elevate Miami program in his state is proof that public-private partnerships can work and benefit citizens. "We have worked with Microsoft for years in Miami to bring technology training to underserved populations," he said. "Now, with Elevate America, we have the opportunity to bring these important skills to even more people, at a time when they are needed more than ever."

Elevate America is an extension of Microsoft's long-standing commitment to provide skills training and certification through schools, government programs and community-based organizations. The Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program is an example of how Microsoft is already working to bridge the technology skills gap and equip more people with skills relevant to today's work force. More than half of today's jobs require some technology skills, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that will reach 77 percent in the next decade.

"Millions of Americans don't have the technology skills needed in today's economy. Through Elevate America, we want to help workers get the skills they need to succeed," Passman said. "We are also providing a full range of work force development resources for state and local governments so they can offer specialized training for their workers."

Short-Term Needs and Long-Term Investments

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more people than ever are pursuing Microsoft technical certifications. As part of the Elevate America effort, Microsoft is providing 1 million Microsoft Learning vouchers for free access to Microsoft eLearning courses and select certification exams.* This comprehensive offering also includes the following:

- Expanded access to basic technology literacy and skills training
 - Basic-level information technology training resources through Microsoft Unlimited Potential and Digital Literacy curricula
- Intermediate technology skills training courses, online and instructor-led, plus selected certification exams
 - Vouchers for eLearning course collections offered by Microsoft
 - Vouchers for certification exams leading to Microsoft business certification
 - Grants of cash and software to community partners to build in-classroom training capacity
 - Discounted membership rates for institutions participating in the Microsoft IT Academy program
- Access to a new Web portal that will help guide individuals to training and resources that position them for success in the economy today, and tomorrow

More information on Elevate America is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica>.

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq: **MSFT**) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

* Requires an Internet connection. Internet connection fees may apply.

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