Expanding Opportunities: Defining Quality Non-Degree Credentials for States

SHEEO Communities of Practice

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Audience Participation (YAY!)

✓ **How many of you are aware if your state has a process for defining credentials of value?**

✓ **What components do you think are important for determining quality?**

Defining Quality for States

✓ **Goal: Develop a consensus definition of quality non-degree credentials for states**

   ✓ **Explored how states are using employment, earnings, and competencies to set quality standards**

   ✓ **Developed initial definition with AL, IA, NJ, TN, VA, WA**

   ✓ **Vetted definition with CO, FL, LA, OR, RI, WV**

   ✓ **Sought feedback from research and advocacy organizations with expertise in higher education and workforce policy, including those with a racial equity mission**

General Principles

✓ **Definition should be student-focused**

✓ **Definition should support equitable credential attainment**

✓ **Information about credentials should be valid, reliable, and transparent**

✓ **States should have flexibility in operationalizing the definition, while still safeguarding quality**

✓ **States should have a public process**

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Definition

A quality non-degree credential is one that provides individuals with the means to equitably achieve their informed employment and education goals. There must be valid, reliable, and transparent evidence that the credential satisfies the criteria that constitute quality.

Required Criteria

✓ **Substantial job opportunities**

Required Criteria

Transparent evidence of the competencies mastered by credential holders

✓Not based on seat time or credit hour

Required Criteria

Evidence of the employment and earnings outcomes of individuals after obtaining the credential

✓Optional: Earnings threshhold

Strongly Preferred Criteria

✓ **Stackability to additional education and training**

The gold standard is that credentials stack to additional education or training, and state and institutional policies should support stackability.

State Examples

- ✓ **Alabama**
- ✓ **Iowa**

Alabama's Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways

✓ **Responsibilities include creating a list of in-demand occupations (regional & statewide) and developing the annual compendium of valuable credentials**

✓ **Membership includes range of workforce, education, and higher education officials**

  ✓ **Co-Chaired by chancellor of community college system and state superintendent of education**

✓ **Will appoint a Technical Advisory Committee for each of 16 career clusters**

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Iowa's Gap Tuition Assistance Program

Programs that meet the following criteria are eligible for this need-based aid for non-credit postsecondary credentials:

1. Aligned with for-credit certificates, diplomas, or degrees;

2. Offers training in an in-demand occupation; and

3. Either results in a state, national, or locally recognized credential; prepares students for professional exams or licensure; provides endorsement for existing credentials or licenses; represents the achievement of skills defined by industry; or offers similar credentials or training as a for-credit program

State Policy Recommendations

✓ **Codify or regulate quality criteria**

✓ **Develop policies to support quality NDC attainment**

✓ **Establish policies to improve data, determine quality, and measure credential attainment**

Data Considerations

✓ Collect broad data about all postsecondary programs

✓ Collect and use demographic data

✓ Match education and employment data across state lines

✓ Develop and/or utilize a state longitudinal data system

✓ Produce a consumer education tool

Implementation Questions to Consider

- ✓ Which programs will be covered by the criteria?

- ✓ Who needs to be around the table when the process is developed? Who will be the responsible entity?

- ✓ What would be the pros/cons of legislating or regulating the criteria?

For more information...

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