Connecting Credentials:
Using Credential Transparency to Meet State Goals

August 2022

Credential Engine™

The Challenge

- The credential ecosystem is large, complex, and confusing
  - 967,734+ unique credentials in the U.S. alone **(with over 10,000 in Minnesota)**;
  - Thousands of competency frameworks and models;
  - About $2T spend on education and training in the U.S. annually;
  - Over 50,000 providers of credentials;
  - Various and unclear quality assurance entities and frameworks, and public awareness

- Before Credential Engine, no common language to describe or compare credentials and competencies. Now the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) is recognized as the standard language to make credentials understandable, comparable, and discoverable.

- Without widespread adoption of this standard common language, people will continue to get lost and lose out on opportunities

Using Technology to Map the Credential Landscape

Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) – Common language that describes key features of credentials, credentialing organizations, competency frameworks, and quality assurance bodies

Common descriptors allow for better apples-to-apples comparison between credentials.

Publishing – After creating a user account, organizations use the API, Credential Registry Publisher, or bulk upload to convert organization, credential, competency framework, and quality assurance information to CTDL and publish to the Registry

Credential Registry – More than a database, the Registry collects and connects credential data described with CTDL and supports and an open applications marketplace

Developers can create specialized applications to utilize Registry data for different types of audiences, such as employers, veterans, and learners.

Credential Finder – A basic app to view and explore the information stored in the Registry.

The public can use the Finder to see all information published to the Credential Registry.
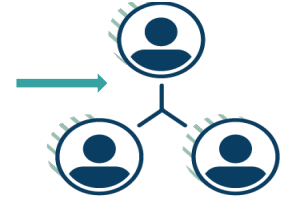
Community – A wide range of stakeholders provide and receive technical assistance and other services to both publish to the Registry and consume the data it houses.

Examples of Rich CTDL Information for Credentials, Qualifications, Skills, Jobs, and more

- Credential issuer information
- Learning opportunities and assessments
- Skills and competencies
- Alignments to quality assurance frameworks
- Connections, such as stacking of credentials and combining skills
- Accreditation and other third-party quality recognitions
- Occupational alignment
- Prerequisites, requirements, cost, and time to earn
- Jurisdiction and revocation where applicable
- Transfer value to other institutions
- Components of education and career pathways
- Bridges to jobs, work roles, and tasks
- Aggregate outcome and labor market information

Credential Transparency Illuminates Paths to a Better Future

Credential Engine™

There are 1 million credentials offered in the U.S. With so many to choose from—and without widespread adoption of standards for comparing and evaluating them—people get lost and lose out on opportunity. Together, we and our partners are working to build a linked open data network that everyone can access for timely and trusted information about credentials.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials include diplomas, badges, certificates, licenses, apprenticeships, certifications, and degrees of all types and levels that represent key competencies signaling what a person knows or can do.

WHAT: TRANSPARENCY

Credential transparency makes essential information about credentials and competencies public, easily accessible, and actionable so that credentials can be better understood and pursued based on what it takes to earn them, what they represent, and the jobs they can lead to.
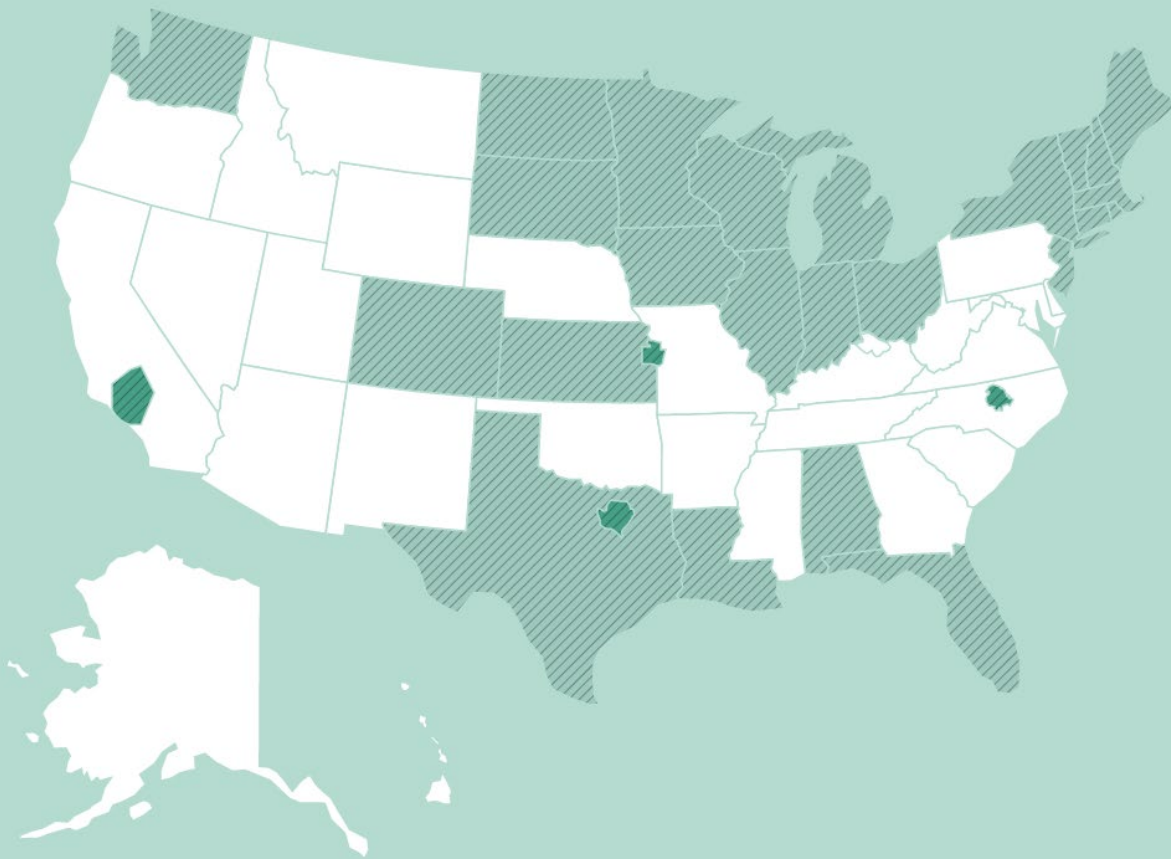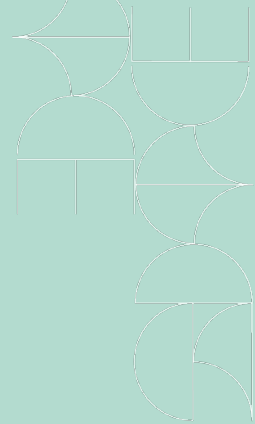
HOW: TECHNOLOGY

Credential transparency is made possible by technology. The **Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL)** schema allows us to catalog, organize, and compare credentials and related information. Credential data from authoritative sources using CTDL is openly available in the **Credential Registry** for anyone, anytime, anywhere to search and compare credentials.

WHY: PATHWAYS

The easier it is to access and use comparable information about credentials, the easier it is for people to find the most effective paths to learn the right skills and find the best jobs. Credential transparency ensures equitable information about quality pathways to opportunities, makes those pathways discoverable, and empowers individuals along the way.

DESIGNED BY TREMENDOUSNESS
Learn more at www.tremendo.us

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CREDENTIAL TRANSPARENCY
The Credential Registry and CTDL
TECHNOLOGY

CLARITY · POWERFUL · CONNECTED · ACCESS · QUALITY · ACTIONABLE
TRANSFERABLE · SCALABLE · RESULTS · VALUABLE · DISCOVERABLE
OPPORTUNITIES · MEANINGFUL · TIMELY · TRUSTED
COMPARABLE · PATHWAYS · EQUITABLE
OPTIONS

VALUE · SKILLS · SUCCESS · ECONOMIC GROWTH

We're doing our part to create and benefit from transparency!

This information helps me find quality credentials that meet my needs!

We know the skills linked to specific jobs!

How can I prepare for a good job?

Credential transparency allows us to reveal credential opportunities aligned to workforce needs.

If we share our credential data using CTDL, then we can all use it to better navigate!

CAREERS
· Workforce needs
· Advancement

INVESTMENTS
· Time
· Money

DIPLOMAS
· High school
· GED

CERTIFICATES
· Training
· Continuing Education

DEGREES
· Two-year
· Four-year

TALENT RETENTION
· Skills-based hiring

MICROCREDENTIALS
· Badges
· MOOCs

TECHNOLOGY
· CTDL
· Credential Registry

Credential Registry data shows us the path from learning to credentials to careers!

LEGISLATION
· Credentials in CTDL
· State/Regional Planning

Transparency helps us be more efficient and flexible by using data to describe jobs and align opportunity.

CTDL

WE CAN
more clearly describe the credentials we offer, their quality and value, and how they meet the needs of individuals, businesses, and the community.

WE CAN
discover and hire people who have the skills and competencies we need for the jobs of today while effectively planning for and signaling the needs of tomorrow.

WE CAN
understand the availability, costs, time, and value of the different credentials available to us. Transparency lets us see how best to get where we're going.

WE CAN
better understand the credentials available, which are high quality, and can better support and inform people to meet talent and economic needs.

CREDENTIAL PROVIDERS · EMPLOYERS · LEARNERS & WORKERS · POLICYMAKERS & THOUGHT LEADERS

The work is already underway in 28 states and regions, and across 2 regional consortia of states.

www.credentialengine.org/state-partnerships

Midwest Credential Transparency Initiative

Goal: Reduce barriers to information, ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to the full range of learning, advancement, and meaningful career opportunities in the region.

Strategies:

- Support publishing at scale across all 12 midwest states
- Develop "community of practice" to share best practices and develop resources
- Identify and support regional use cases
- Spur technology innovation and integration through master contracts
- Advance a regional value proposition for credential transparency

Career Pathways: Nearly 700 pathways in the Midwest containing credentials. Less than half had transfer value/credits or associated competencies. Virtually none connected to out of state offerings.

Current	Future
Pathways are hard to create and manage	Pathways are part of workflows
Pathways are outdated	Pathways are linked to labor market
Pathways are hard to find	Pathways are ubiquitous and widely accessible
Pathways are hard to understand	Pathways are understandable
Pathways have gaps	Pathways have logical steps from entry to exits
Pathways are disconnected	Pathways are connected
Pathways are for 'generic' users	Pathways support everyone

CTE Pathways: *An analysis of Midwest state legislative policies is forthcoming*

Integrating National Initiatives to Meet State Goals

Value or Quality of Non-Degree Credentials	**Fund Short-Term Credentials**	**Credential Transparency**

Define quality, develop a policy agenda to increase the number of residents with quality credentials, and develop the data policies to support such efforts. Quality credentials are:

- Supported by labor market information
- Have evidence of competencies mastered
- Measure employment and earnings outcomes
- Ensure stackability along a career pathway

Make financial aid available for high-quality, short-term credentials, ensure working student have access to support services and career advising they need to succeed. Ensure accountability by:

- Disaggregate data to meet state goals around credential attainment and equitable access
- Make higher education and workforce outcomes data comprehensive and transparent

Create cross-agency and cross-system partnerships to support comprehensive efforts, make pathways and outcomes transparent through customer information tools. Policy actions include:

- Create a repository of all credentials in the state
- Link and align to other essential data
- Require vendors support full transparency and interoperability of data

Equity

Minnesota's Focus on Credential Attainment

Minnesota Attainment Goal (MOHE)

70 percent of Minnesotan's age 25-44 will have attained a post secondary credential by 2025

Equity 2030 Minnesota State

By 2030, Minnesota State will eliminate the educational equity gaps at every Minnesota state college and university

Align strategies to the goals of the P-20 Education Partnership, GWDB and Minnesota's workforce system

Alignment to Workforce System

OUR CASE STATEMENT is shared among many stakeholders:

- Minnesota has an inadequate supply of qualified workers for many jobs
- Highest inequities are racial minorities and other under-represented groups
- Funding needs to be targeted and aligned to achieve best results
- Greater opportunities are needed to help unemployed and under-employed succeed in our current economy
- Goal is to reduce barriers and provide flexible funding / resources
- Support adults to learn while they earn or received acknowledgement for skills gained through employment

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) & Prior Learning Assessments (PLA)

- CPL/PLA: tool for awarding college-level credit for work experience, quality/industry-recognized credentials, military experience or training, other professional experience or training
- 2018 NAWB Report: "PLA offers a great opportunity for WDBs & the workforce system to better & more efficiently integrate work-based learning with classroom learning to better serve job seekers and employers"
    - NAWB: Powerful tool at the disposal of WDBs (may require program/grant redesign)
- CPL for quality, industry-recognized credentials: bridges gaps between short-term training and college degree programs - STACKABILITY
- Equity tool: on-ramp to college that recognizes certs and/or experience (& additional postsecondary pathway for those w/o h.s. diploma)
- PLA for Financial Aid: If a school determines via PLA that one's credentials/experience is worth 6+ college credits, they can then become eligible for enrolling in a college program w/o h.s. diploma *and* eligible for federal financial aid (like Pell Grants)

Full NAWB Report on LWDBs utilizing PLA: https://www.nawb.org/resources/publications

Our strategies are designed to lower barriers and increase access to education and training to achieve economic mobility

ADULT LEARNING STRATEGIES

- Pathways to College Enrollment

- Credit for Prior Learning (C-PLAN)

- Placement in College Courses

- Ability to Benefit State Plan

- Military Credit Transfer

CREDENTIALS OF VALUE INITIATIVES

- Quality Credentials Academy

- Credential Engine

- Midwest Credential Transparency Alliance

- Non-credit to Credit Alignment Lab

- State Financial Aid for Quality Non-degree Credentials

Certificates to Credits C-PLAN Initiative: Example of "Pre -Mappping" CPL

- DEED-Coursera Partnership: June 2020-April 2022
  - 13,000 Minnesotans signed up; 3500+ completed 1+ course
- C-PLAN (MN State) team worked with GWDB staff and campuses to help "pre-map" CPL
- In the coming weeks: "Certificates to Credits" public announcement
  - 8 MN State Campuses (1 or more in 5 of 6 workforce development regions)
  - "Pre-mapped" certificates (ex: "If you have the Google IT Support Certificate, here are the campuses that will award you 12 college credits on the front end…."
- Under this Coursera partnership model:
  - Workforce agency/system provided access to online learning content
  - Some CBOs built-in "wrap-around" supports & programming (TSB example)
  - Credential has standalone industry value AND is now pre-mapped for CPL
  - Coursera certs provide for a good example, but could be any quality, industry-recognized credential
- Building WFD programming with CPL in mind keeps pathways that involve a college degree more accessible for learners completing a short-term training program

CPL-Embedded WFD Programming
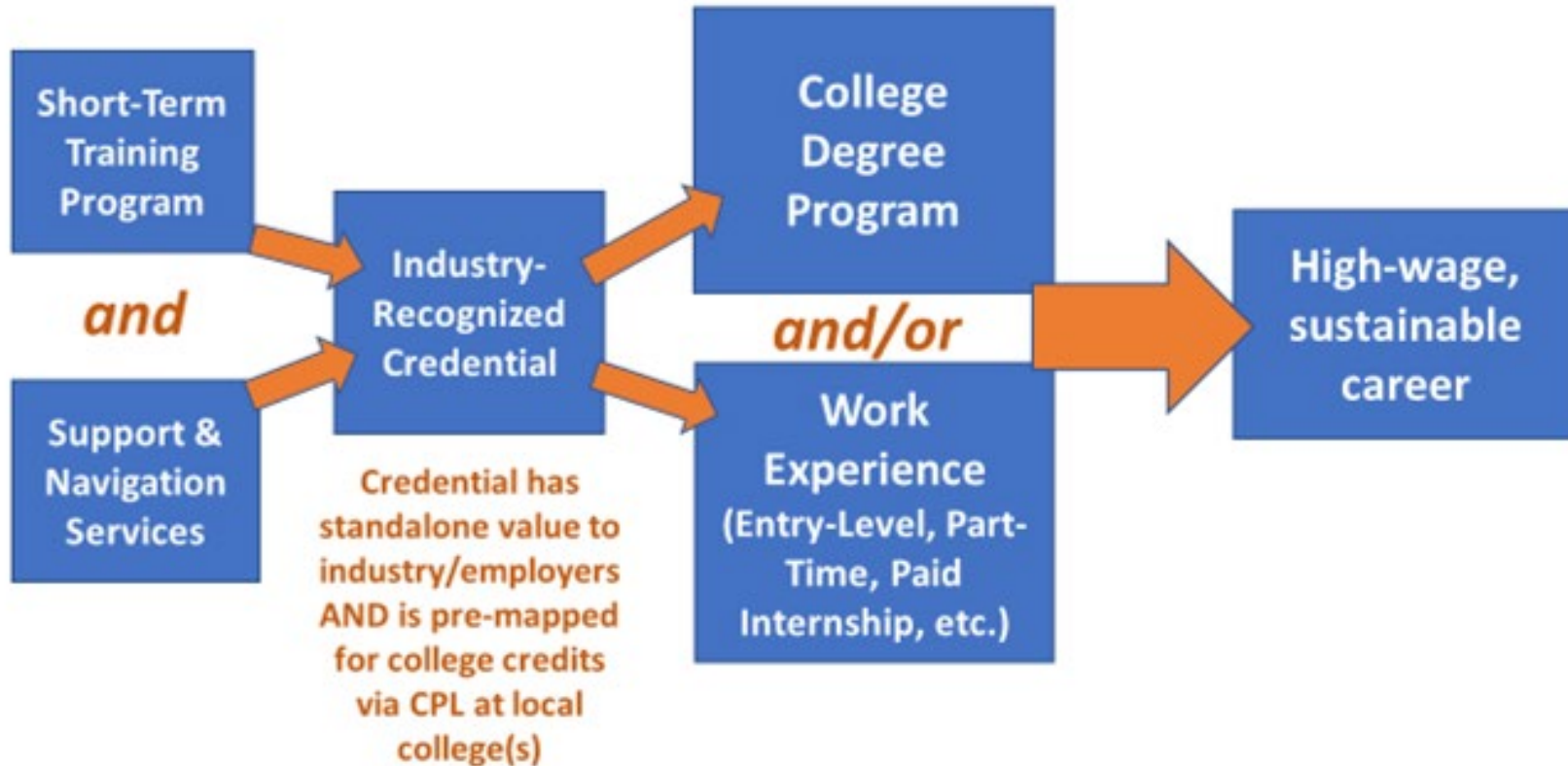
WFD-Education "Alignment" Efforts

- NSC Quality Credentials Policy Academy:
  - Lead Orgs: DEED, OHE, & MN State Colleges & Universities
  - Engaging with workforce, education, & community partners/stakeholders
  - Exploring best practices from other states/systems, such as [Hawaii's Promising Credentials initiative](#)
  - Main Deliverables:
    - Common definitions re: "quality credentials" (data-driven)
    - Framework/rubric/tool for assessing a credential's quality (usable across WFD and higher education)
    - Policy and/or other actionable recommendations (GWDB & P-20 Education Partnership will both review)
- GWDB Executive Committee "Relaunch" & other GWDB committee restructuring to establish stronger inter-agency, cross-sector connections for our system

Future Trends

- Measuring job quality includes more than just the financial aspects of sustainable pay and benefits; it also includes flexible work schedules, workplace safety, opportunities for career development, and **meaningful engagement between employers and employees that promote inclusion** and belonging.

- A learning and employment record (LER) is a digital record of learning and work that can be **linked to an individual and combined with other digital records** for use in pursuing educational and employment opportunities. LERs are verifiable, secure, and shared by the individual, and interoperable across education and employment systems.

For More Information

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