Building a System for Non-Degree Credential Quality: A Landscape Scan of National Influences on NDC Quality

Supplemental Document: Summary of Organizations

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This supplemental document to EERC's "Building a System for Non-Degree Credential Quality: A Landscape Scan of National Influences on NDC Quality" summarizes the mission and activities of key organizations engaged at a national level in the work of NDC transparency and quality assurance that are included in the landscape scan. In total, data in the form of interviews and/or documents from 66 national organizations are included. To assist the field in sharing current understandings, we also include links to relevant documents disseminated by these organizations. As this is a rapidly changing landscape, we note that despite the comprehensiveness of this scan, there are other organizations that warrant inclusion.

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1EdTech Consortium (formerly IMS Global)

URL: https://www.1edtech.org/

1EdTech's mission is to power learner potential by fostering the evolution of an open, trusted, and innovative education technology and digital credentials ecosystem. The Consortium aims to provide leadership and collaboration to shape the future of education. Through community-developed open standards, 1EdTech enables digital learning connectivity, data insights, and improved product choice. Its goal is to establish trust and transparency in EdTech partnerships through community-governed certification programs that verify stringent requirements for product integrations, data privacy, and accessibility. It aims to accelerate the adoption of new technologies that advance digital learning to meet the evolving needs of educators and learners. Collaborating with entities like the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education, and the Online Learning Consortium, 1EdTech's goal is to apply technology standards to enhance education.

1EdTech works to improve the transferability, transparency, and validity of non-degree credentials through the development and evolution of Open Badges and the Comprehensive Learner Record Standard™. It emphasizes the standardization, portability, and data richness of digital credentials to ensure easy verification and sharing across various platforms. 1EdTech's collaborations with educational institutions, EdTech companies, and other stakeholders focus on adopting technologies that support the interoperability and data exchange of non-degree credentials like digital badges, microcredentials, and CLRs. 1EdTech employs a multifaceted approach that includes developing open standards, facilitating stakeholder collaboration, and providing implementation resources. The Consortium advocates for interoperability and data exchange within the EdTech ecosystem, influencing various educational stakeholders from school districts and state education agencies to EdTech companies and national organizations.

As an international organization, 1EdTech Consortium collaborates with educational institutions and stakeholders globally. The Wellspring Project brings institutions and employers together to drive the use of digital credentials across the board, automate matching credentials with education and opportunities, and empower individuals to find jobs. Currently, 1EdTech and HR Open Standards Organization are working to integrate Open Badges 3.0 and CLR 2.0 within HR Open's digital resume to create a new Learning and Employment Record Resume Standard (LER-RS). 1EdTech recently announced the TrustEd Microcredential Coalition, which is a coalition of digital credential senior leaders from higher education, edtech suppliers, and K–12 districts intending to set standards for the information that digital credentials need to contain about skills, knowledge, and abilities achieved, as well as the interoperability of the credentials.

» Open Standards and Transparency Groups Team Up to Improve Information on Credentials (2019) - https://www.1edtech.org/article/open-standards-and-transparency-groups-team-improve-information-credentials

» Preparing Your Institution for Skills-Based Hiring (Grann & Leuba, 2021) - https://www.1edtech.org/article/skills-based-hiring

» What Will It Take for Employers to Accept Microcredentials - https://www.1edtech.org/blog/what-will-it-take-for-employers-to-accept-microcredentials

» Open Badges: Cutting Through Chaos with Transparency - https://www.1edtech.org/blog/open-badges-cutting-through-chaos-with-transparency

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC)

URL: https://www.accsc.org

ACCSC was established in 1965 and began accrediting schools. It received its initial recognition by the then-Office of Education as a recognized and reliable authority on quality education in 1967. ACCSC's primary focus is on vocational education, and the scope of its accreditation includes a wide range of programs and credentials, from short-term certificates in Truck Driving to MBA programs. Most programs and institutions ACCSC accredits offer non-degree programs, accounting for about two-thirds of its review. Of the degree programs approved by ACCSC, 75 percent are at the associate degree level, 24 percent at the baccalaureate level, and between 1 and 2 percent at the graduate level. The mission of ACCSC is to ensure quality education that enhances student success in both the workplace and workforce. Its approach is focused on student-centric accreditation, where student success in the form of outcomes serves as a gauge for institutional success. ACCSC establishes input standards to ensure foundational quality, comprehend the institution's mission, and measure the degree to which students successfully complete their programs and transition into the workforce. Its goal is to set clear standards and expectations and evaluate both quantitative and qualitative success in line with the institutional mission.

ACCSC plays a pivotal role in non-degree credential quality. Its involvement encompasses setting standards, measuring success rates, assessing alignment with institutional missions, evaluating student success, and conducting comprehensive program evaluations. Its definition of quality is multifaceted, combining institutional mission alignment, student success rates, workforce transition, curriculum development, affiliations with the employment community, and program assessments. ACCSC also emphasizes the importance of quality metrics such as program success, graduation rates, employment rates, program evaluation, student satisfaction, and ties with industry and the employment community. ACCSC focuses on accrediting a broad spectrum of postsecondary institutions offering vocational and technical training programs, covering both degree and non-degree programs. It collaborates with employers, emphasizing the importance of education that enhances student success in the workplace. In addition, ACCSC has established a program-level certification program entitled Essential Workforce Skills whereby institutions can seek to have an add-on review of a program's curriculum to assess the extent to which a set of pre-defined workforce skills (euphemistically referred to as "soft skills") are addressed.

> » Application for a New Non-Degree Program: Affiliated Schools - https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.accsc.org%2FUploadedDocuments%2F2023%2FIRD-Apps%2FJuly-2023%2FBatch-3%2FApplication-for-Non-Degree-Program-Affiliated-070123.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

> » Accreditation Plan Resources: Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education - https://www.bppe.ca.gov/schools/accredplan_resources.shtml

> » Directory of Accredited Institutions - https://www.accsc.org/Directory/index.aspx

Advance CTE

URL: https://careertech.org/

Advance CTE's mission is to support state leadership in career and technical education (CTE) by advocating for high-quality and equitable CTE policies, programs, and pathways. It strives to create an accessible and flexible career preparation ecosystem that ensures college and career success for each learner. The organization collaborates with national partners such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Achieving the Dream, and Credential Engine to accomplish these goals.

While Advance CTE does not define non-degree credential quality specifically, it focuses on enhancing the quality of non-degree credentials such as industry-recognized certifications, licenses, apprenticeships, digital badges, and other technical skills credentials. It does this by advocating for programs that align with industry standards and are valued by employers. Its approach includes research, technical assistance, and best practice promotion to ensure these credentials meet industry needs.

Advance CTE works closely with various stakeholders, including business and industry associations, educational institutions, state education agencies, workforce development boards, and other national CTE-focused organizations. It aims to improve both the quality and recognition of non-degree credentials through joint initiatives, information-sharing, and partnership projects. It provides support, resources, and advocacy across all 50 states, influencing a range of entities from state education agencies to policymakers.

» Creating an Impact with Credential Quality and Transparency: A State Policy Toolkit - https://careertech.org/resource/credential-quality-toolkit

» Measuring Nondegree Credential Attainment - https://careertech.org/resource/measuring-nondegree-credential-attainment

» Measuring Nondegree Credential Attainment: A 101 Guide for States - https://careertech.org/resource/measuring-nondegree-credential-attainment-101-guide

» Nondegree Credentials: Paths to the Workforce and Future Education - https://careertech.org/resource/nondegree-credentials-policy-outline

» Non-degree Credential Quality: A Conceptual Framework to Guide Measurement - https://careertech.org/resource/non-degree-credential-measure-value

» Perkins V Implementation Resources - https://careertech.org/perkins-virtual-resource-table

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

URL: https://www.aacrao.org/

AACRAO's mission is to serve as a comprehensive resource hub for higher education officials in administrative areas like admissions, record management, enrollment management, student services, and IT. The organization provides professional development tools, guidelines, voluntary standards, and essential resources to help professionals in admissions, registration, and enrollment services succeed. AACRAO collaborates with thousands of institutions worldwide, including 1EdTech Consortium, ARSEE, ATEM, to achieve these goals. Its ultimate aim is to be the primary innovative resource for individuals pursuing academic service careers.

While AACRAO does not specifically define the quality of non-degree credentials, it works to promote best practices and standards within higher education that also apply to such credentials. The organization provides various resources, including publications, conferences, online learning, and research, to support best practices in admissions, academic records, and enrollment management. Although AACRAO mainly focuses on degree-granting institutions, its work also extends to the non-degree credentials these institutions offer. AACRAO partners with higher education institutions, governmental bodies, and other professional associations at local, state, national, and international levels to promote best practices and standards. AACRAO's scope is nationwide and international, without focusing on specific states.

» The Complex Universe of Alternative Postsecondary Credentials and Pathways (Brown & Kurzweil, 2017) - https://www.aacrao.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/cfue_alternative-pathways.pdf?sfvrsn=50e5853f_0

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

URL: https://www.aacc.nche.edu

AACC is the longstanding national membership organization for community colleges, including over 1,000 predominantly associate degree-granting institutions. It acts as a national voice advocating for the mission of community colleges while serving as the nexus for information and network building for those in the community college movement. The association also supports community college leadership development through targeted institutes and professional development opportunities. One priority for the AACC is to influence federal policy and media coverage in support of community colleges in carrying out their missions. AACC recognizes and promotes the multiple missions of the community college including its role in workforce development, access to educational pathways from high school and to four-year institutions, community and economic development and lifelong learning. As a membership organization, AACC seeks to build strong ongoing relationships with member community colleges and at the same time provide the relevant resources to community colleges to help them best serve current and future students.

AACC has a variety of roles in non-degree credential quality. As part of its mission to influence federal policy, AACC has been advocating for the passage of workforce Pell with appropriate guardrails in place to ensure quality while not unduly limiting the number of programs that would be eligible. AACC is active in these federal policy conversations, advocating for the nation's community colleges and their work in offering programs that lead to non-degree credentials. Beyond its federal policy advocacy, the association seeks to understand the needs of communities, business, and community colleges seeking to build a robust talent pipeline with measurable and sustainable outcomes. This approach builds on AACC's work with the Voluntary Framework for Accountability that offers colleges a set of institutional metrics to demonstrate their outcomes. This highlights AACC's efforts to think broadly about how to measure quality in education where it considers both input and outcomes measures, including course completion rates, successful job placements, and the trajectory of wage progression over absolute wage benchmarks. A lot of work has been done with credit programs, and these efforts may be extended and adapted to measures for shorter-term programs.

AACC has a wide imprint, serving the majority of the nation's community colleges as members. It partners closely with a wide range of organizations including the Credential Engine and the Department of Labor in ways that could inform the non-degree credential discussion. In addition to federal advocacy, the association considers ways to collect information on non-degree credentials to better inform the conversation and to spur thinking on issues such as how to span credit and noncredit programs and ways to do more prior learning assessments.

> » Data Points: Multiple Goals -
> https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/datapoints/

» Noncredit Enrollment in Workforce Education -
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503447.pdf

» Non-Degree Leadership Resources: AACC 21st Century Virtual Center -
https://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/resources/resources_nondegreeleadership/

American Council on Education (ACE)

URL: https://www.acenet.edu

ACE was initiated as the Executive Council on Education post–World War I, granting it a nearly century-long legacy. Its founding purpose was to assist veterans in transitioning back into higher education. Broadly, ACE's mission resonates with mobilizing stakeholders in higher education to foster efficacious public policies and innovative best practices in American higher education. Specifically, within the realm of non-degree credentials, ACE endeavors to discern and evaluate the quality of these credentials. It strives to harmonize learning outcomes with assessment techniques and to bolster the establishment of pathways addressing labor market and higher education institution demands. Its ambition encompasses fostering the growth and acknowledgment of the value of non-degree credentials while addressing equity and attainment challenges.

ACE's essential role in non-degree credential quality is in its proficiency in evaluating and appraising learning outcomes and proficiencies. Its rubrics and evaluation methodologies embody competency-based education, allowing institutions, instructors, and employers to ascertain whether individuals have realized the designated learning outcomes of their programs. ACE believes that aligning learning outcomes with assessment techniques is paramount for non-degree credential quality. Its influence extends to policy dialogues, evaluations, and offering technical expertise. Understanding and assimilating market procedures and catering to employer prerequisites is pivotal for ACE to craft pertinent superior non-degree credential schemes. Labor markets critically shape the contour of non-degree credentials, with regional variations and a tilt toward skills-centric hiring, molding the value and recognition of these credentials.

ACE maintains synergies with many stakeholders, including academic institutions, state systems, associations, and governmental bodies. It extends technical support to states, backs institutions in conceptualizing and rolling out non-degree programs, and participates in legislative and regulatory discussions at the federal level.

> » Learners: Seeking Credit With the National Guide -
> https://www.acenet.edu/National-Guide/Pages/Seeking-Credit.aspx
>
> » Transcripts and ACE Learning Evaluations -
> https://www.acenet.edu/programs-services/pages/credit-transcripts/request-transcripts.aspx
>
> » Understanding ACE Digital Credentials -
> https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Credit-Transcripts/Understanding-ACE-Recommendations.aspx

ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB)

URL: https://anab.ansi.org/ and https://anab.ansi.org/mission/

ANAB aims to be a global leader in accreditation services while providing high-quality accreditation of conformity assessment services. Working closely with its parent organization, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and other organizations like the Department of Justice and the Food Marketing Institute, ANAB's ultimate goal is to serve as the architect for conformity assessments of industry-specific programs. ANAB offers a range of accreditation services, including management systems certification, proficiency test providers, inspection bodies, forensic agencies, and personnel credentialing organizations, as well as training on accreditation-related topics.

ANAB specializes in accrediting organizations that issue various types of credentials, including non-degree certifications. It focuses on ensuring that such organizations meet established international and national standards, including ISO/IEC 17024, which defines the competency requirements for personnel certification bodies. ANAB accredits training/educational certificate programs based on ANSI/ASTM 2659 standard. In addition, ANAB offers recognition program for apprenticeship/work-based learning program. By doing so, ANAB aims to promote confidence in the credentials issued and assures their validity, reliability, and integrity. The board also develops policies and procedures and offers technical support, peer evaluations, and ongoing monitoring to ensure continued compliance with established standards.

ANAB partners with various partners, including industry and regulatory bodies, standards-development and standard-setting organizations, certification and inspection bodies, governmental agencies, industry associations, and other stakeholders interested in accreditation and standardization in the sectors where ANAB provides accreditation. Its influence extends to various local, state, and national organizations that rely on accredited conformity assessment services, including certification bodies, regulatory agencies, and industry organizations.

> » Personnel Credentialing Accreditations -
> https://anab.ansi.org/accreds/personnel-credentialing/
>
> » The Complex World of Certifications -
> https://share.ansi.org/wc/shared%20documents/workcred-reports/understanding-certifications-study/the-complex-world-of-certifications-reports-overview-presentation.pdf

Association for Talent Development (ATD)

URL: https://www.td.org/

ATD aims to empower professionals to develop talent in the workplace. The organization offers various resources, including conferences, a job bank, educational programs, and research-driven information. Its ultimate goal is to support employers in advancing their employees' skills.

ATD enhances the quality of non-degree credentials through its Certification Institute, offering industry-recognized certifications such as the Certified Professional in Talent Development and the Associate Professional in Talent Development. It ensures credential quality by adhering to rigorous development processes, collaborating with subject matter experts, and maintaining industry best practices. ATD certifications are continuously updated to align with the evolving needs of the talent development profession.

ATD collaborates with various organizations, from educational institutions and industry associations to corporations and government agencies. These collaborations involve joint research projects, education and professional development offerings, and initiatives to promote the value of talent development. The organization's influence extends to corporate learning departments, government workforce agencies, nonprofit organizations, and industry-specific associations, globally.

- » Don't Call It a MOOC (Castellano, 2015) - https://www.td.org/magazines/dont-call-it-a-mooc

- » Employers Are Getting on Board with Nondegree Credentials (Lewis, 2023) - https://www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/employers-are-getting-on-board-with-nondegree-credentials

- » Go Micro (Collins, 2020) - https://www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/go-micro

- » MOOCs: Did We Expect Too Much Too Soon? (Chakraborty, 2015) - https://www.td.org/atd-blog/moocs-did-we-expect-too-much-too-soon

Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF)

URL: https://www.bhef.com

In 1978, BHEF was established to foster collaboration between business and higher education leaders to address pressing workforce and talent needs. BHEF's work focuses on anticipating skill needs and improving pathways between higher education and the workforce. By bringing together senior leaders from both sectors, BHEF seeks solutions to ensure all learners—including those in nontraditional, diverse, and underrepresented populations— are prepared for the increasingly digital demands of the future of work.

BHEF emphasizes the rising significance of non-degree credentials (NDCs) as a pivotal component in the contemporary workforce landscape. It advocates for these credentials' quality, relevance, and recognition in the broader education and employment arena. To ensure these credentials meet industry needs and rigorous standards, BHEF supports creating and promoting frameworks and standards for NDCs. Furthermore, BHEF encourages the integration of quality NDCs into conventional education pathways, aiming for a comprehensive approach to talent and skill development.

BHEF maintains a broad network of partnerships, which includes collaborations with top corporations and prominent higher education institutions. Through these strategic partnerships, BHEF designs and promotes collaborative models to address specific talent and skill development needs. BHEF is involved in policy discussions, ensuring the perspectives and needs of the business community are well-represented in broader education and workforce development dialogues.

- » Increasing Workforce Skills and Diversity - https://www.bhef.com/publications

- » How CUNY Partnered with Amazon to Increase Economic Mobility - https://www.bhef.com/publications

- » How Skills are Disrupting Work: The Transformational Power of Fast Growing, In-Demand Skills - https://www.bhef.com/publications

- » Creating the Future Workforce Today - https://ww.bhef.com/publications

- » Workforce Partnership Initiative Case Studies - https://www.bhef.com/publications

- » Building Bridges to Success: Regional Business-Higher Education Partnerships to Grow and Diversify the STEM Workforce - https://www.bhef.com/publications

» Designing and Implementing Work-Based Learning: A Call to Action for CHROs -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

» Reskilling – A Solution for the Digital Skills Gap -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

» Reskilling America's Workforce: Exploring the Nation's Future STEM Workforce Needs -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

» Creating Purposeful Partnerships -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

» Future Skills, Future Cities: New Foundational Skills in Smart Cities -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

» The New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy: Developing the Professionals of the Future -
https://www.bhef.com/publications

Canvas Credentials (Formerly Badgr)

URL: https://www.instructure.com/higher-education/products/canvas/canvas-credentials?domain=badgr

Canvas Credentials, formerly Badgr, aims to increase student success, emphasize the importance of teaching, and foster an inclusive learning environment. Operated by education technology company Instructure, its goal is to offer an open, flexible, and widely accessible platform that enables organizations to issue and manage a variety of non-degree digital credentials such as badges, certifications, and microcredentials. It works with companies that share similar missions—e.g., Microsoft, Zoom, Google, AWS, and Nearpod—and collaborates with organizations including educational institutions, employers, training providers, and professional associations. These partnerships often involve integrating Canvas Credentials' platform with existing learning management systems, training programs, and talent development initiatives.

Canvas Credentials provides a sophisticated badging tool system to help administrators improve digital badging initiatives. It uses the Open Badges standard to ensure these credentials are interoperable, verifiable, and can be displayed across various platforms. The badges issued by Canvas Credentials are designed to be credible, verified, and aligned with specific skills or competencies. By focusing on its platform's functionality and security, the company strives to offer secure and shareable credentials that both employers and educational institutions can trust.

> » Managing your Canvas Badges/Credentials Account - https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Badges/Managing-your-Canvas-Badges-Credentials-account/ta-p/528685

> » What are Canvas Credentials? Instructure Community - https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Credentials/What-is-Canvas-Credentials/ta-p/529094

CareerOneStop: Certification Finder

URL: https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-certifications.aspx

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, CareerOneStop aims to be a comprehensive and trusted online resource for employment and workforce information. Its mission is to help students, workers, and employers make informed economic decisions by providing easy-to-understand, all-encompassing workforce information. The agency collaborates with various partners such as American Job Centers, Competency Model Clearinghouse, Disability.gov, and others to achieve this goal.

CareerOneStop provides extensive information on career pathways that include non-degree credentials like certifications, licenses, and apprenticeships. While it does not explicitly define the quality of these credentials, it offers tools and resources that help individuals evaluate the potential value, industry recognition, and accreditation of various credentials. This information helps job seekers, students, and employers understand their options and make choices about credentials. CareerOneStop collects data on both certification and occupational licenses. License information is collected by a partner project called the Analyst Resource Center (ARC), which is focused on analyzing job postings from the National Labor Exchange. ARC identifies certifications in these data to find out which are most in demand, then enable users to identify those in-demand certifications with the help of its Certification Finder tool.

Working with state and local workforce agencies, educational institutions, and industry associations, CareerOneStop provides resources relevant at local, state, and national levels across the United States. It works with various partners to offer localized information and services to better assist their diverse audiences.

> » Welcome to CareerOneStop's Toolkit -
> https://blog.careeronestop.org/welcome-to-careeronestops-toolkit/

> » Certifications: A Power Tool for Career Advancement -
> https://blog.careeronestop.org/certifications-a-power-tool-for-career-advancement/

> » Find New In-Demand Certifications -
> https://blog.careeronestop.org/find-new-in-demand-certifications/

> » Find the Certifications Employers Value the Most -
> https://blog.careeronestop.org/find-certifications-employers-value/

Chamber Foundation

URL: https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/

The Chamber Foundation (the Foundation) is the nonprofit arm of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. It focuses on educational and workforce initiatives, corporate citizenship, and emerging issues influencing the nation's ability to compete globally. Its mission is to educate the public on how business practices lead to growth and innovation, promote economic growth, and help people improve their lives. The Foundation harnesses the power of business to create solutions for the good of America and the world. Specifically, its multifaceted capabilities allow it to anticipate, develop, and deploy solutions to the challenges facing communities today and tomorrow.

The Foundation takes an active interest in the changing landscape of postsecondary education and workforce development, which includes the recognition and validation of non-degree credentials. It understands the importance of these credentials in ensuring that the American workforce remains competitive. The Foundation has conducted studies, provided forums, and collaborated with other institutions to ensure the quality and relevance of these credentials in the marketplace.

The Foundation uses a holistic approach where employers lead the charge in creating and maintaining a stronger talent pipeline fit for our modern economy and that includes those who have been underserved by career and education systems. It cultivates career pathways by bridging crucial communication gaps between business and education and harnesses new technologies to support a well-run talent marketplace, connecting students to careers by promoting standards-driven approaches, closing achievement gaps, and positioning employers to be strong partners to the education community. The Foundation supports success for current and future generations by empowering businesses to lead the charge on early childhood education and create new solutions. By equipping businesses to lead on these issues, the Foundation seeks to have positive effects radiate outward into communities across the country, promoting economic mobility and opportunity for everyone so that no one is left behind.

The Foundation collaborates with various stakeholders, from businesses to educational institutions to government agencies. Its partnerships and scope of work are broad and dynamic, changing based on current initiatives, projects, and priorities.

> » Talent Finance Quality Assurance Workgroup Report (2023, Apr 24) -
> https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/reports/talent-finance-quality-assurance-workgroup-report

Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN)

URL: https://www.c-ben.org

C-BEN began when the Lumina Foundation brought together a group of competency-based education (CBE) pioneers from various colleges and universities that had a mutual interest in sharing insights and learning collaboratively. The network's vast span covers over 600 colleges and universities and numerous state agencies. C-BEN aims to be the definitive resource for individuals and institutions keen to comprehend, develop, or execute CBE. The essence of CBEN's mission revolves around amplifying the efficacy and quality of learning by emphasizing competency over the conventional time-based educational measurements. Central to this idea is the vision of learner progression anchored on competency mastery rather than conventional course durations. C-BEN's mission pillars involve advocating for an educational paradigm shift, nurturing a diverse practitioner community, ensuring alignment of educational outcomes with employer needs, and championing high-quality learning tailored to the labor market.

At the core of C-BEN's endeavors is advocacy of CBE as a flexible and valuable medium of postsecondary education and training. The network's role pivots on ensuring that non-degree credentials reflect genuine skill mastery, transparency, and alignment with workforce requirements. Quality, as perceived by C-BEN, is rooted in the outcomes-focused learning model, alignment with labor market requisites, and transparent articulation of skills and competencies. Its goal is a favorable return in the labor market marked by learners' prowess in the competencies they have mastered.

C-BEN's influential spectrum encompasses quality framework designs, partnership initiatives, standard-setting, and best practice endorsements. Its collaborative efforts bring together an array of stakeholders, inclusive of educational establishments, policy architects, employers, and community-based entities. The breadth of credentials C-BEN concerns itself with is expansive, spanning from degree to non-degree certificates to apprenticeships and microcredentials. The mission is further enriched through strategic alliances with educational institutions, policymakers, employers, community bodies, and research-centric organizations.

>> CompetentU -
https://www.c-ben.org/competentu/

>> Quality Framework for Competency-Based Education Programs -
https://www.cbenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CBEN-22-005-Quality-Framework-for-CBE-Programs-A-User_s-Guide.pdf

>> Hallmark Practices in CBE Assessment -
https://www.c-ben.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CBE-2021-Hallmark-Practices-WEB.pdf

>> Resource Library -
https://www.c-ben.org/resource-library/

>> Understanding Competency-Based Education -
http://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/CBE-Toolkit-2017.pdf

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

URL: https://www.cael.org

CAEL is a national nonprofit membership organization that works to improve education-to-career pathways for adult learners. The organization brings together organizations that support adult learners and provide them with the tools and solutions they need to effectively serve this population. For nearly 50 years, CAEL has sought to align education programs with labor market needs, working with organizations to develop sustainable policies and processes that support partnerships -- all while underscoring the value of lifelong learning for all Americans and especially those most underserved. The organization seeks to increase access to education-to-career pathways to empower populations with the skills and knowledge needed to advance in rewarding careers. This work seeks to uplift communities that have been left behind and advances the economic well-being of communities, regions, states—and the entire country. CAEL works with education providers, employers, industry groups, workforce offices, and economic development organizations to better align its services and programs to support adult learners. Its expertise includes credit for prior learning (CPL), including the prior learning assessment process; developing strategies aligned to education options and labor market needs; mapping career pathways for adult learners; and developing policies and processes to support long-term sustainability of partner programs.

For 50 years, CAEL has been the leader for advancing the concept of credit for prior learning (CPL)—ways to recognize and count the college-level learning that is acquired through work, life, and military experience. As part of this larger effort, CAEL works directly with postsecondary institutions, workforce agencies, and other entities to develop credit crosswalks and high-quality CPL program offerings that often help to create alignment between non-degree credentials and formal credit-bearing degrees. Broader options for recognizing CPL set the stage for adult learners to fast-track their educational ventures and accumulate credentials. CAEL emphasizes accessibility and equity dimensions in non-degree credentials, sealing its commitment to affordability and tailor-making them to resonate with adult learner requirements. One of the pivotal research endeavors undertaken by CAEL delved into examining the quality metrics of non-degree credentials and the interplay between these credentials, economic development, and strategic workforce pathways.

CAEL's extensive outreach and influence spans a spectrum of entities such as states, academic institutions, community colleges, workforce boards, economic development organizations, industry associations, labor unions, and employers. It builds coalitions among business, industry organizations, and postsecondary institutions to establish and maintain healthy workforce pipelines—two of CAEL's long-running industry partnerships include those for the energy industry (Energy Providers Coalition for Education) and communications (National Alliance for Communications Technology Education and Learning).

» Speed, Value, and Economic Mobility: How Community Colleges Are Developing Short-Term, High-Value Credentials that Lead to Good Jobs and Careers (March 2023) - https://www.cael.org/resources/research/speed-value-and-economic-mobility

» Incremental Credentials: Giving Students the Tools to Own Their Learning and Open Doors to the New Labor Market (2022) - https://www.cael.org/news-and-resources/incremental-credentials-giving-students-the-tools-to-own-their-learning-and-open-doors-to-the-new-labor-market

» Incremental Credentials: Small Steps for Students, Giant Leaps for Adult Learning (2023) - https://www.cael.org/news-and-resources/incremental-credentials-small-steps-for-students-giant-leaps-for-adult-learning

» Why Credit for Prior Learning. Free Resource Kit - https://www.cael.org/lp/cpl-pla

» Professional Development & Training - https://www.cael.org/membership/professional-development-and-training

» Platforms and Tools - https://learnworkecosystemlibrary.com/alliance/council-for-adult-and-experiential-learning-cael/

Council on Integrity in Results Reporting (CIRR)

URL: https://cirr.org/

CIRR is dedicated to providing prospective students with honest and transparent data on bootcamp outcomes before they enroll. It aims to facilitate easy understanding for students and straightforward implementation for providers by implementing a standardized system for reporting all student results from bootcamp providers. The ultimate goal is to create an environment in which students can fully understand the outcomes of the bootcamp provider they apply to.

CIRR contributes to the quality of coding bootcamps by setting standards for transparent and truthful reporting of student outcomes. While CIRR is not directly involved in defining the quality of the credentials, it enhances quality assurance by holding providers accountable for accurate reporting of metrics like job placement rates and salaries. CIRR has established standardized reporting methods it expects members to follow, and it conducts audits and offers resources to ensure compliance and facilitate comparison across different programs.

CIRR collaborates with a wide range of stakeholder members, such as Course Report, Ascent, and State 3 Talent, Ada, Codesmith, and Tech Elevator. These partnerships extend CIRR's influence to various coding bootcamps, potential students, employers, and even regulatory bodies or policymakers interested in the field. CIRR's standards aim to establish nationwide consistency and transparency across coding bootcamps, working with providers across the United States without focusing on specific states.

- » CIRR Standards 2020 - https://cirr.org/standards

- » Schools with a Mission - https://cirr.org/about

Credential Engine (CE)

URL: https://credentialengine.org

CE's mission is to ensure transparency across all types of credentials, spanning credit, noncredit, for-profit, and not-for-profit—and to fuel the creation of resources that empower individuals to find the best pathways. CE supports the development of credential definitions through the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) and engages states in making credential and competency information available as linked open data. Its primary goal is to streamline efforts, enhance credential transparency, and facilitate the publication of credentials to the Credential Registry. Major functions include ensuring transparency across all credential types; collaborating with states to develop and support credential definitions using CTDL; establishing clear frameworks for publishing credentials to the Registry in partnership with national organizations; recognizing a diverse range of partners in the credential landscape, including state agencies, intermediaries, and third-party certification providers; and assisting states in achieving their education and workforce goals by emphasizing the importance of credential transparency, enabling students and workers to identify valuable credentials.

CE is committed to elevating the quality of non-degree credentials through processes like data mapping, publication, connection, and pathway creation. It collaborates with states to map their information about credentials and their competencies to CTDL, including making non-degree credentials more accessible and interconnected. CE recently developed a tool for crafting linked data pathways for these credentials and partners with digital badge publishers to facilitate direct badge information publication to the Registry. Its comprehensive focus includes all credential varieties like certifications, licensure, apprenticeships, and badges/microcredentials, aiming to formulate a universal language for all credentials.

CE collaborates with various entities, including state offices of higher education; Boards of Regents; community college and university systems; workforce or labor agencies; and licensing boards. It also maintains ties with national organizations, such as Data Quality Campaign, Education Commission of the States, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, National Skills Coalition, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, as well as vendors in the EdTech domain. Primary entities influenced by CE's initiatives include states, federal entities, educational institutions, and equity-centric organizations. CE collaborates with these entities to integrate credential transparency into state systems and align with overarching state and federal objectives.

- » Creating an Impact with Credential Quality and Transparency (2020) - https://credentialengine.org/resources/new-resource-creating-an-impact-with-credential-quality-and-transparency/

- » Making Information About Credentials More Actionable Through Increased Transparency and Quality Assurance (2021) - https://credentialengine.org/resources/policy-brief-quality-assurance/

- » The Role of State in Credential Transparency (2021) - http://credentialengine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Role-of-States-in-Credential-Transparency.pdf

Credly by Pearson

URL: https://www.credly.com

Credly by Pearson is a digital credentialing platform that allows organizations to recognize, verify, and share their members' accomplishments and skills in the form of digital badges. Credly's mission is to connect individuals with verifiable and portable digital credentials that enable them to showcase their achievements and skills. By doing so, Credly aims to empower individuals in their professional journeys and provide organizations with a more comprehensive view of the capabilities within their communities.

Credly strongly emphasizes ensuring that the digital badges and credentials issued through its platform are meaningful, verifiable, and aligned with industry or organizational standards. By providing a platform where accomplishments are based on defined criteria and evidence, Credly ensures the quality and relevance of its credentials. These digital badges can represent various skills, achievements, or knowledge, including those earned outside traditional degree pathways.

Credly collaborates with various organizations, including professional associations, companies, training providers, and academic institutions. These entities utilize Credly's platform to issue digital badges that recognize professional development, certifications, microcredentials, and other achievements. Credly's scope is broad, serving domestic and international clients across various sectors and industries.

» Credly by Pearson -
https://www.credly.com/

» How to Manage and Share Your Digital Credentials: Resource Hub -
https://learn.credly.com/blog/how-to-manage-share-your-digital-credentials

» Micro-Credentials: The New Enrollment Funnel for Tomorrow's University -
https://universityservices.wiley.com/stackable-credentials/

» Solutions for Higher Education -
https://info.credly.com/solutions/higher-education

» What's a Non-Degree Credential? -
https://learn.credly.com/blog/whats-a-non-degree-credential

Data Quality Campaign

URL: https://dataqualitycampaign.org/

The Data Quality Campaign's mission is to ensure that data serves everyone involved in education and workforce development. It leverages data to improve policy, education, and career outcomes. Grants from various philanthropic foundations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, among others, fund the organization.

Focused on advocating for robust high-quality statewide longitudinal data systems to enhance student and jobseeker outcomes while maintaining appropriate privacy protections, the Data Quality Campaign engages in discussions related to the quality, availability, and use of state-level data on non-degree credentials (NDCs). Though the organization does not focus on NDCs directly, it works with a wide variety of state and institutional leaders, researchers, and advocates to craft policy recommendations and champion policies and practices that effectively inform decision-making processes for all data users throughout the education and workforce pipeline, including data and decision-making related to NDCs.

The organization's reach extends to educational institutions, state education agencies, policymakers, advocacy groups, and other educational organizations. Its primary funders and partners are philanthropic foundations and educational organizations.

> » What Now? A Vision to Transform State Data Systems (2023) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/a-vision-to-transform-state-data-systems/

> » Better P–20W Data Will Require More Advanced Workforce Data Systems (2023) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/DQC_Workforce-Policy-Recommendations_May-2023-1.pdf

> » Workforce Data Reforms: Coalition Priorities (2023) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Workforce-Data-Reforms.pdf

> » From the Kitchen Tables of Jenn and Paige: What We're Watching, Week of October 26 (Bell-Ellwanger & Kowalski, 2020) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/kitchen-tables-week-of-october-26/

> » How State Leaders Are Using Data to Support Current Workforce Needs (Washington, 2022) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/state-leaders-using-data-to-support-workforce-needs/

> » States Can Help Individuals Chart Their Own Paths by Prioritizing Credential Transparency (Clark, 2020) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/states-can-help-individuals-chart-their-own-paths-by-prioritizing-credential-transparency/

» State Leaders Are Prioritizing Workforce Readiness but the Data to Get There Is Missing (Dabney, 2019) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/career-and-technical-education-blog/

» Clear Career Pathways Require Connected Data (2020) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/connected-credentials/

» From the Kitchen Tables of Jenn and Paige: What We're Watching, Week of June 1 (Bell-Ellwanger & Kowalski, 2020) - https://dataqualitycampaign.org/from-the-kitchen-tables-of-jenn-and-paige-what-were-watching-week-of-june-1/

Digital Promise (DP)

URL: https://digitalpromise.org

DP is a global nonprofit working to expand opportunity for each learner. It partners with educators, researchers, technology leaders, and communities to design, investigate, and scale up innovations that empower learners, especially those who have been historically and systematically excluded. DP's efforts are multifaceted, centered on equity, and grounded in the real-world challenges facing learners and educators. Its programs empower educators and communities with resources and support to move ideas about learning and equity from aspirational concepts to tried-and-true practices.

Specific to DP's work in the non-degree credential (NDC) space, the organization has set a goal of empowering 30 million historically excluded learners with postsecondary credentials by 2031—credentials that offer economic security, well-being, and agency. To ensure that the credentials earned by these learners have real-world value, DP actively engages in enhancing the quality of microcredentials and supports competency-based learning. It has crafted a robust framework for competency-based microcredentials, ensuring that they are rigorous, valuable, and rooted in research-backed practices. Its platform subjects NDCs to a rigorous assessment procedure involving double-blind reviews, and decisive actions by the issuing entities ensures their quality and integrity.

DP stresses the significance of recognizing learning inside and outside traditional schooling structures. DP's badging initiatives offer educators pathways for skill enhancement and career advancement, emphasizing the value of alternative certification routes and pathways for educators. A call for clearer guidelines for recognizing credentials is evident in its efforts to differentiate between truly meaningful credentials and superficial participation badges.

DP collaborates with various issuing partners to craft competency-based microcredentials and engages with states to advocate for and to refine NDC quality and recognition standards.

> » DP Resource Repository: LYRASIS - https://digitalpromise.dspacedirect.org/

> » DP Reports - https://digitalpromise.org/our-reports/

US Department of Labor (US DOL)

URL: https://www.dol.gov

US DOL is a central federal entity responsible for workforce development and promoting occupational training tailored to meet the economy's demands. Its core mission is to foster the development of a skilled workforce that is responsive to the evolving demands of the economy. This is primarily achieved through specific occupational training, often more custom-made than conventional education. There's a marked emphasis on apprenticeships and occupation-targeted training.

Furthermore, US DOL prioritizes the identification and endorsement of alternative credentials, which stand as a testament to an individual's skills apart from traditional degrees.

US DOL plays an instrumental role in ensuring the quality of non-degree credentials, focusing on fostering workforce development and bridging connections between key stakeholders in the labor market. Its involvement spans various areas, such as supporting workforce development, reducing entry barriers via occupational licensing, curating acknowledged certification and license databases, and placing importance on credentials' relevance and practical applicability.

To ascertain the quality of a credential, US DOL evaluates its relevance to specific occupations, its recognition within industries, its potential for employment preparation, and its capacity for comprehensive skill development. Factors like demand, industry endorsements, and recognition by authoritative entities are pivotal in this quality determination. Key outcomes of US DOL's initiatives encompass licensing reform, the advent of the Credential Finder tool, augmented collaboration with partnering organizations, discerning succession planning requirements, and addressing credentialing quality through initiatives like Eligible Training Provider Lists.

US DOL's influence extends to various stakeholders, achieved through policy guidance, technical assistance, data sharing, grants, and collaboration. Its primary credential focus areas are licenses, certifications, and certificates. It collaborates with significant entities like the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and the National Labor Exchange. Stakeholders influenced by the DOL's endeavors include state legislatures, workforce boards/agencies at various levels, workers, job aspirants, employers, academic institutions, immigrants, research entities, and tech corporations. Its guidance, resources, and standards have far-reaching implications for these entities. Promising tactics for quality promotion include inter-organizational collaboration, data-centric tools like the Certification Finder, and state-driven initiatives. However, there are recognized gaps, such as a need for outcome follow-up data and privacy concerns.

> » Credential Resources Attachment -
> https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEN/2020/TEN_25-19_Attachment_1.pdf

> » Credentials: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics -
> https://www.bls.gov/ors/factsheet/credentials.htm

» Measures of Education and Training: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics -
https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm

» Working Definitions of Non-Degree Credentials: National Center for Education Statistics -
https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena/definitions.asp

Education and Training Administration (ETA)

URL: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta

ETA is a division of the U.S. Department of Labor. Its core mission is to cater to the requirements of both employers and job aspirants, directing its efforts toward employment and training. Specifically, ETA targets middle-skilled jobs, which are defined as roles demanding education beyond high school but not necessarily a bachelor's or advanced degree. Its overarching objective is to facilitate training and employment pathways for individuals targeting these middle-skilled positions.

ETA acknowledges the significance of industry-endorsed credentials, certificates, and apprenticeships for job seekers. Although it does not set direct quality benchmarks for these credentials, ETA offers guidelines and criteria determining the recognition of a credential for performance evaluations under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It emphasizes credentials recognized and valued across multiple employers within a sector. Defining, evaluating, and communicating the significance of non-degree credentials is vital to ensure their relevance and recognition in the labor market and educational domain. ETA assumes a regulatory position, setting out the criteria for acknowledging industry-endorsed credentials per WIOA's stipulations and assuring its utility in job placement and career progression. The spectrum of credentials under ETA's purview encompasses industry-recognized credentials, occupational licenses, certificates, registered apprenticeships, and technical and vocational education certificates. These credentials are factored into performance assessments under WIOA.

ETA coordinates with other entities within the Department of Labor, such as MCN, OSHA, EBSA, the Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Veterans Employment and Training group, and the Women's Bureau. Additionally, it acknowledges national organizations like Credential Engine, the National Governors Association, and the National Conference of State Legislatures. ETA's initiatives in credential quality extend to diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, educational institutions, training providers, workforce development agencies, and individuals seeking job or training avenues. State-level strategies are highlighted as promising avenues, and fostering collaborations among stakeholders is deemed pivotal for refining credential quality.

» Division of Research & Evaluation: U.S. Department of Labor - https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research

» ETA Research Publications: U.S. Department of Labor - https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research/publications

» Registered Apprenticeship Evidence: U.S. Department of Labor - https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research/Registered-Apprenticeship-Evidence

Education Commission of the States (ECS)

URL: https://ecs.org

ECS serves as a resource and collaborative partner to policymakers and education leaders, offering insights and experiences to foster successful changes in education policy. It compiles information on education policy, issue education policy reports, provide personalized counsel, and facilitate spaces where policymakers and education leaders can mutually learn and collaborate.

ECS takes a comprehensive approach to the quality of non-degree credentials by conducting research, offering policy considerations, and promoting best practices. While ECS itself does not define the quality of non-degree credentials, its work in this area focuses on their relevance, recognition, and rigor in meeting industry needs and standards. Collaborations in this area include state education departments, higher education institutions, workforce agencies, and nonprofit organizations, although the specifics depend on individual projects and initiatives.

ECS's influence spans local, state, and national education agencies, lawmakers, governors, and other education stakeholders. ECS's initiatives and resources are intended to provide support and policy considerations to all U.S. states and territories.

- » Nondegree Credentials: Paths to the Workforce and Future Education (2021) - https://www.ecs.org/nondegree-credentials-paths-to-the-workforce-and-future-education-2/

- » Policy Levers to Advance Credential Transparency (Anderson & Perez Jr., 2023) - https://www.ecs.org/policy-levers-to-advance-credential-transparency/

- » The Need for Upskilling and Reskilling in a Time of Crisis (Anderson & Keily, 2020) - https://ednote.ecs.org/the-need-for-upskilling-and-reskilling-in-a-time-of-crisis/

- » Workforce Development - https://www.ecs.org/research-reports/key-issues/workforce-development/

Education Design Lab (EDL)

URL: https://eddesignlab.org/

EDL is a national nonprofit dedicated to driving the nation's shift toward a more equitable skills-based economy. It leverages a proven, human-centered design process to help higher education, workforce, and employer stakeholders tackle the most challenging issues interfering in the success of new majority learners. Over the last ten years, the Lab has worked with more than 1,190 colleges and institutions, 950 employers, and 24 ecosystems (states, systems, and cities) to co-design, test, and build new models and approaches to better address program affordability, relevance, portability, and visibility in a rapidly changing knowledge economy. Multiple funding sources, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ascendium, ECMC Foundation, Charles Koch Foundation, and Walmart.org, support the Lab's work.

The Lab is committed to enhancing the quality and relevance of non-degree credentials through research, development, and implementation of innovative approaches. Working closely with employers and educators, it co-designs, tests, and scales new credentialing models that align with workforce demands. EDL defines the quality of non-degree credentials by their relevance, recognition, and value in the labor market. The Lab's focus extends to various types of non-degree credentials, such as micro-pathways industry-recognized certifications, microcredentials, and digital badges.

EDL maintains a wide-ranging network of partners for collaboration, including educational institutions, employers, industry associations, workforce intermediaries, and state agencies. Its collaborative efforts include joint projects, research initiatives, and partnerships to validate and develop alternative credentials and pathways that align to employer needs. The Lab influences local, state, and national organizations, including employers, educational institutions, government agencies, and policymaking bodies. The Lab currently partners with a range of organizations, including SHRM Foundation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Credential Engine, Muzzy Lane, Opportunity@Work, D2L, Brighthive, and many others in the education-to-work space.

» Catalyzing the Transition to Micro-Credentials & Skills-Based Hiring (2021) -
   https://eddesignlab.org/areas_of_work/microcredentials-skills-based-hiring/page/4/

» Why Micro-Pathways (2020) -
   https://eddesignlab.org/news-events/why-micro-pathways/

» Skill Validation as a Means of Awarding Non-Degree Credentials -
   https://eddesignlab.org/news-events/what-does-skills-validation-mean-education-design-lab-defines-key-terms-and-shares-market-scan-of-skills-validation-methods/

» Design Insights: Early Lessons in Validating Skills and Lived Experiences -
   https://eddesignlab.org/resources/design-insights-early-lessons-in-validating-skills-and-lived-experiences/

Education Strategy Group (ESG)

URL: https://edstrategy.org/

ESG's mission is based on the conviction that education beyond high school is pivotal for triumph in the current economic landscape. Its reform initiatives span secondary, postsecondary, and workforce levels. Its primary objective is to assist a broader spectrum of learners, especially those of color and low-income backgrounds, in obtaining valuable credentials. Part of this endeavor is integrating quality non-degree credentials into the higher education framework to ensure they are not terminative but rather grant economic mobility or act as steppingstones to further education and training. ESG also concentrates on adult learners, seeking to elevate credential attainment and enable smooth transitions between noncredit/non-degree credential courses and credit-oriented ones.

ESG is committed to ameliorating non-degree credential quality to facilitate learners, notably those from marginalized groups, in acquiring valuable post-high school credentials. Its ventures encompass the orchestration of multi-state networks, coalition-building and report publishing such as "Credential Currency," and direct state implementation to confront low-value credentials and guarantee learner economic mobility through attainment. ESG's work spans both noncredit credentials as well as credit credentials, and it has developed frameworks to support pathways between the two. The organization accumulates data and scrutinizes the manner in which colleges actualize alignment frameworks to assure quality conduits. ESG's influence is predominantly channeled through policy recommendations, network and coalition building, and strategy and implementation, emphasizing transparency, setting norms, and steering state-level policies and structures.

ESG is actively engaged with both the K–12 and postsecondary domains, forging alliances with an array of entities to assimilate quality non-degree credentials into the higher education ecosystem. It concentrates on a myriad of credential types, ranging from noncredit to credit credentials like certifications, licenses, diplomas, and microcredentials. ESG collaborates with significant players like the North Carolina Community Colleges and liaises with state governments, wielding influence over policy and refining non-degree credential quality.

> » Building Credential Currency - https://edstrategy.org/resource/building-credential-currency/

> » Credentials of Value Toolkit - https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Credentials-of-Value-Toolkit-Release-2.pdf

> » A More Unified Community College - https://edstrategy.org/resource/a-more-unified-community-college/

> » Implementation Work in Hawaii - https://edstrategy.org/esg-featured-work/identifying-promising-credentials-in-hawaii/

Equity Quality Outcomes Standards (EQOS)

URL: https://eqos.org

EQOS, a division within Jobs For the Future (JFF), was established in 2020. It emerged out of the Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships initiative launched by the Obama administration in 2015. Its prime mission is to empower adult learners and workers to achieve career pathways leading to economic mobility. The organization's work is focused on non-degree credentials (NDCs) closely tied to communities, the workforce, and the labor market. Its broader vision encompasses promoting accessibility, affordability, success, and equity in these NDC programs.

EQOS was designed as a distinctive framework and a suite of tools dedicated to evaluating the potency and quality of NDCs. With the acquisition of EQOS by JFF in 2022, JFF harnessed the expertise of EQOS to enrich the quality evaluation of short-term credentials. JFF's strategy pivots around using innovative data tools, emphasizing quality indicators to steer stakeholders in assessing NDCs. Essential aspects of EQOS/JFF's quality assurance include leveraging data analytics, devising a recommender system, cross-referencing diverse data sources, and employing inference modeling to grasp and enhance the attributes of NDCs that yield optimal outcomes.

EQOS works as a vital intermediary among postsecondary institutions, workforce boards, and local communities to construct career pathways and develop talent. Many partnerships have been forged, including affiliations with entities like Burning Glass, College Board, Social Finance, National Skills Coalition, Credential Engine, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These institutions authenticate the quality of NDCs and bolster the capability of community colleges to deliver those programs.

» Education Quality Outcomes Standards: JFF - https://archive.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/education-quality-outcomes-standards-eqos/

» Education Quality Outcomes Standards: EQOS Framework - https://learnworkecosystemlibrary.com/initiative/education-quality-outcomes-standards/

Guild Education

Established as a learning platform in the education sector, Guild, whose primary focus is "unlocking economic and social mobility for America's workforce," boasts an enrollment of 1,200 working adults as of 2023. The organization offers programs of varying lengths across numerous fields of study, yet interestingly, nearly half its eligible employees opt for short-form credentials over traditional degrees. Guild sees a degree as a valuable asset for economic mobility but acknowledges that is not the only path; it therefore offers a variety of short-form credentials, boot camps, and upskilling programs. Having undergone a rebranding and mission evolution, Guild now works with diverse education providers to create stackable learning pathways aligned with high-demand career trajectories.

Guild takes an active stance in ensuring the quality of non-degree credentials. This is achieved through a meticulous program vetting process and continuous monitoring. It evaluates a spectrum of parameters such as design, learner support, communication strategies, user experience, and equity in its offerings. Collaborations with employers and higher education institutions facilitate the identification of stackable credentials aligning with industry requisites, paving the way for further degree attainment. A key aspect of Guild's approach involves balancing addressing immediate talent needs with short-form credentials and laying the foundation for longer-term value with degree attainment.

Guild's influence spans several key stakeholders, including employer partners, learning providers, active learners, policymakers, and workforce boards. The organization collaborates with traditional and nontraditional education providers, from universities to boot camps, offering a broad spectrum of credentials. Employer partnerships are pivotal for Guild, with many employers fully funding education via Guild's platform. Such collaborations enhance talent retention and facilitate smooth learner pathways, particularly in domains like healthcare and IT. Additionally, Guild maintains affiliations with organizations like American Council on Education, Quality Matters, Competency-Based Education Network, and others. Concurrently, Guild is active in engaging with state-level policymakers. This engagement is driven by the dual goals of addressing talent deficits and responsibly venturing into state-regulated domains. These alliances foster discussions on non-degree credentials, quality assurance, competency assessment, and credit transferability.

> » How Guild Works: Employee Skilling & Career Development Guild - https://www.guild.com/how-guild-works/

HCM Strategists (HCM)

URL: https://hcmstrategists.com/

HCM is a public policy and advocacy consulting firm, with a particular focus on postsecondary education policy and practice. Since its inception 15 years ago, HCM has diligently cultivated relationships and executed projects across all 50 U.S. states, underscoring its expansive reach and commitment to public policy. Its aim is to create equitable and affordable education systems, striving for equal outcomes for all learners. The firm's expertise spans a broad spectrum of areas, including strategic higher education finance, governance structures, assessments concerning the value and quality of credentials, enhancement of state longitudinal data systems, and the development and execution of strategic plans. Its ultimate goal is to be a practical problem solver, contributing to equitable change for underserved communities in the education system. HCM collaborates with various foundations and organizations, including the Lumina Foundation, ECMC Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and George W. Bush Institute, to execute a number of large-scale, grant-funded projects.

HCM works on education and workforce development, participating in discussions around the quality and recognition of non-degree credentials. Although the organization applies its expertise in research, policy analysis, and advocacy to influence decisions in this area, HCM's precise definition of non-degree credential quality is not identifiable.

As a public policy and advocacy firm, HCM employs a multifaceted approach that includes research, advocacy, policy analysis, and coalition building to effect positive change in both the education and healthcare sectors. Its influence is felt across local, state, and national levels, impacting educational institutions, advocacy groups, and government agencies.

» A Typology and Policy Landscape Analysis of State Investments in Short-term Credential Pathways (Murphy) - https://hcmstrategists.com/resources/a-typology-and-policy-landscape-analysis-of-state-investments-in-short-term-credential-pathways

» Pioneering Perspectives: Mapping the Uncharted Terrain of State Investments in Short-Term Credential Pathways (Murphy) - https://hcmstrategists.com/resources/pioneering-perspectives-mapping-the-uncharted-terrain-of-state-investments-in-short-term-credential-pathways

Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

URL: https://www.hlcommission.org/

Established in 1895, HLC has garnered a well-respected reputation in the realm of quality assurance. This longstanding history lends itself to a sense of reliability and expertise. As summarized in its "Evolve 2025" strategic plan, HLC's mission revolves around advancing the common good. Its central vision is the quality assurance of higher education, positioning itself as a trusted leader in the transformative journey of accreditation. Its endeavors are consistently oriented toward addressing students' needs and the needs of the institutions that serve them. HLC believes in prioritizing students. By acting as a proactive champion of higher education quality, its objective is to serve students and institutions efficiently.

HLC's foray into the non-degree credentialing sphere has been marked by examining the multifaceted ways these credentials materialize, e.g., as stand-alone offerings, pathways leading to conventional degrees, or credentials introduced by third-party entities. HLC's commitment to assuring quality in this arena involves facilitating training, bestowing endorsements upon third-party providers, and laying down a comprehensive quality assurance framework, particularly for short-term certificates and certifications. Through detailed studies and white paper publications, HLC endeavors to understand the fluctuating nuances of the educational landscape, thus reinforcing its stature in the accreditation and quality assurance domain. The HLC Credential Lab was announced in early fall 2023.

HLC's influential touchstone is its rigorous quality assurance and accreditation process. Its methodology involves thorough scrutiny of curricula teaching protocols and the applicative relevance of educational content. Its future strategy includes plans to evaluate third-party providers, involve national advisory boards, and foster collaborations with regional accrediting counterparts and other relevant organizations. Such partnerships would seek to gather standards and experiential insights relating to an array of short-term credentials, including non-degree credentials, continuing educational programs, stackable credentials, and both credit and noncredit programs. Recognizing the role of states in the quality assurance realm, HLC's engagements stretch to state-level organizations, with entities like Credential Engine, Workcred, several credential-oriented organizations, and the Online Learning Consortium being viewed as potential collaborators or stakeholders.

> » Guidelines on Accreditation Requirements: News-Reports -
> https://www.hlcommission.org/News-Reports/guidelines-on-accreditation-requirements.html

> » HLC Credential Lab Announcement -
> https://download.hlcommission.org/CredentialLabAnnouncement.pdf#:~:text=HLC%E2%80%99s%20Credential%20Lab%20will%20engage%20broad%20stakeholder%20groups,to%20know%20the%20quality%20of%20external%20content%20providers

Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE)

URL: https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/

ICE is committed to enhancing the value of credentialing organizations by promoting quality practices. Its mission encompasses accreditation, advocacy, education, innovation, research, and the development of standards. ICE seeks to establish a community where credentialing organizations and professionals can access valuable resources and research to continually improve their programs. The ultimate aim is to benefit the public, employees, and the workforce through quality practices in credentialing.

ICE specializes in supporting credentialing organizations by offering guidance, resources, and accreditation mainly through its accrediting body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). The organization emphasizes adherence to industry best practices and established standards in credentialing. The NCCA standards act as a framework for evaluating various aspects of certification programs, including structure, governance, and psychometric soundness. Through conferences, webinars, publications, and other tools, ICE enables organizations to maintain and elevate the quality of their credentialing programs.

ICE collaborates with a wide array of partners, including credentialing organizations, governmental agencies, professional societies/trade associations, educational institutions, and industry bodies to advance the field of credentialing. With over 30 industry partners, the organization influences a diverse range of stakeholders interested in professional and occupational certification. ICE's focus is national, extending its reach across the United States without concentrating on particular states. It serves various sectors that require professional and occupational certifications and credentials to validate competence.

» ICE Resources for the Non-Degree Credential Quality Ecosystem - https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/About/ICE-Resources-for-NDCQ

» Microcredential Toolkit Resource Aimed at the Credential Provider Audience - https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/Resources/Microcredentialing-Toolkit

International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET)

URL: https://www.iacet.org/

IACET is committed to advancing the global workforce by establishing and upholding a standard framework for quality learning and development. IACET strives to enhance the quality of continuing education and training by leveraging research, resources, and the continual improvement of IACET standards. The organization has developed essential accreditation tools, including the Continuing Education Unit and the ANSI/IACET Standard for Continuing Education and Training. The ultimate goal is to offer standards and guidance to help organizations worldwide improve the quality of their educational programs.

IACET assures quality in continuing education and training, including professional development, certification preparation, re-certification, and other non-degree learning experiences. Its ANSI/IACET Standard, to which providers must adhere to earn IACET accreditation, defines quality through specific criteria related to program design, development, delivery, and evaluation. The organization's efforts extend to accrediting providers, conducting workshops and research and offering resources that promote continuing education and training quality.

IACET collaborates with diverse partners, including educational institutions, professional associations, corporations, and governmental bodies. Specific partners range from ANSI, with whom it developed the Standard for Continuing Education and Training, to various industry organizations like SiteSafety, AAACE, and ASTM International. IACET's influence spans multiple sectors, such as corporations, educational institutions, government agencies, and professional associations that provide or depend on quality continuing education and training. The organization operates nationally and internationally, accrediting providers across the United States and worldwide without focusing on specific states or regions.

» ANSI/IACET 2018-1 Standard for Continuing Education and Training - https://www.iacet.org/standards/ansi-iacet-2018-1-standard-for-continuing-education-and-training/

» Guidelines for Competency-Based Learning - https://www.iacet.org/standards/guidelines-for-competency-based-learning/

» Guidelines for Open Digital Badging - https://www.iacet.org/standards/guidelines-for-open-digital-badging/

» IACET's ANSI Accreditation - https://www.iacet.org/standards/iacet-s-ansi-accreditation/

» Pursuing IACET Accreditation in 2023? (LaMarsh, 2023) - https://www.iacet.org/news/iacet-blog/blog-articles/pursuing-iacet-accreditation-in-2023/

International Organization for Standardization (ISO/IEC)

URL: https://www.iso.org/home.html

ISO collaborates with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) to develop voluntary, relevant international standards that help provide quality solutions to global challenges. While ISO promotes international proprietary, industrial, and commercial standards, IEC's mission centers on international standards and conformity assessment specific to electrical, electronic, and related technologies. Together, the organizations aim to guide document review and publication, raise awareness about standards, provide standardization education, and serve as a resource for standards-related research. Their ultimate goal is to lead the world in the development of standardization.

ISO/IEC plays a significant role in non-degree credential quality by developing and maintaining international standards for the quality and recognition of certifications, qualifications, and accreditations. Through standards like ISO/IEC 17024, it set the criteria for operating a Certification Body to ensure consistent and impartial certification. While its focus is not limited to educational non-degree credentials, its standards provide a framework for certification bodies to ensure reliability and consistency in various professions and industries.

ISO/IEC collaborates with various entities, including national standards bodies, governmental agencies, industry associations, and international organizations like the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. It influences organizations at various levels, including national standards bodies such as ANSI in the United States and BSI in the UK, multinational corporations, governmental regulatory agencies, and industry-specific associations. Its reach is global, working with national standards bodies in member countries worldwide to represent its respective countries in developing international standards.

» ISO 9001 and Related Standards - https://www.iso.org/iso-9001-quality-management.html

» ISO All Standards Page - https://www.iso.org/standards.html

League for Innovation in the Community College (the League)

URL: https://www.league.org/

The League, with an operational history spanning approximately 55 years, was the brainchild of UCLA professor B. Lamar Johnson, who brought together presidents from twelve of the most innovative community colleges in the country. Born during a phase marked by rapid growth in community colleges, the League's purpose was to cultivate an infrastructure facilitating the gathering and mutual exchange of innovative ideas among forward-thinking community colleges. The genesis of the League was centered around the promotion of innovative practice in community college education. Over time, the League embraced disruptive innovation in the community college context, exploring instructional applications for innovations such as advancements in AI and emergent wearable technology.

The League's mission is meticulously carved to catalyze innovation and propagate thought leadership within the realm of community colleges, with a distinct approach that focuses on practice rather than policy. The fabric of the League's membership is woven with CEOs from community colleges in the United States and Canada. League conferences witness a mosaic of attendees ranging from faculty to college presidents. Central to the League's mission is the emphasis on pillars such as the interweaving of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and workforce development with liberal education, while consciously steering clear of political affiliations.

The League undertakes an instrumental role in pioneering innovation, imbuing thought leadership, and accentuating quality assurance in community colleges. Its spectrum of influence embraces arenas like teaching and learning, STEM disciplines, leadership, and workforce refinement. As part of its commitment to quality, the League ardently endeavors to ensure the relevancy and caliber of non-degree credentials, placing a spotlight on skills that resonate with industry requisites. To achieve this, the League navigates through a collaborative tapestry, interwoven with partners that collectively mold educational programs and uplift the quality assurance benchmarks for emergent educational paradigms.

Partnerships are central to the League's operations, fostering synergies with various entities like ECMC Foundation, Education Design Lab, Workcred, Higher Learning Commission, and more. These collaborations are crafted to resonate with the contemporary needs of diverse stakeholders, from students and employers to the community at large. The League's approach is inclusive, reflected in its affiliations with entities like EAB, where the participation of community college representatives is nonnegotiable. This inclusivity ensures a broadened perspective and a holistic approach to the League's initiatives. The impact of the League resonates with community colleges that are harnessing the power of innovation in education to transform the lives of their students.

> » Underserved Populations Career Pathways - https://www.league.org/projects-careerpathwaysinretailmanagement

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CESS)

URL: https://www.msa-cess.org/

Established in 1887, MSA-CESS has a longstanding history. Initially created to standardize education across regions, the organization became known for its unique approach, focusing on individual school improvement. About two decades ago, the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) advised separating its commissions, resulting in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) being separated from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CESS). The MSA-CESS, which focuses on postsecondary non-degree-granting schools, aims to promote educational excellence across a diverse range of institutions. Its guiding values include upholding rigorous standards to safeguard educational quality, serving as an independent voice, fueling progress and discovery in higher education, and championing quality via reflection, growth, and meaningful change.

MSA-CESS returned to accrediting postsecondary non-degree-granting schools about 12 to 14 years ago. Schools primarily under its umbrella offer industry tests or national certifications. It emphasizes a quality assurance process that involves a self-study based on five standards, focusing significantly on outcomes. Notable among MSA-CESS standards is the 70-70-70 rule, which considers completion rates, licensing attainment, and field-specific employment. Programs accredited by MSA-CESS, which are eligible for Title IV funding, must maintain a minimum program completion rate of 70 percent. Noncompliant institutions risk probation or accreditation removal. The organization's comprehensive accreditation standards include curriculum instruction, resources, governance, student well-being, and more. While MSA-CESS accreditation is at the institution level, compliance verification occurs at the program level.

MSA-CESS's involvement in accreditation covers nearly 3,000 schools across all 50 states and in 117 nations worldwide, offering a broad range of credentials. The types of schools it works with are diverse, ranging from medical schools to cosmetology schools. While most are for-profit institutions, public secondary and postsecondary schools are also part of MSA-CESS's portfolio. The organization collaborates extensively with educational institutions and regulatory bodies to ensure standards are met and maintained.

» Resources -
https://www.msche.org/resources/

» Standards -
https://www.msche.org/standards/

National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)

URL: https://www.naswa.org/

NASWA represents the state workforce agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. These agencies deliver training as well as employment, career, and business services in addition to administering unemployment insurance, veteran reemployment, and labor market information programs. NASWA's mission is to enhance state workforce agencies' ability to accomplish their goals, statutory roles, and responsibilities. It provides a platform for states to inform national policy on workforce and unemployment issues.

While NASWA plays a significant role in workforce development, training, and employment services, it is not directly responsible for ensuring non-degree credential quality. However, given its focus on workforce development and training, non-degree credential quality is a topic of interest to its members, state workforce agencies, and its various initiatives or discussions.

NASWA collaborates with various federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other workforce-related entities to achieve its objectives. Its scope of work spans a wide range of workforce issues, from unemployment insurance to labor market information to veterans' services. The association also provides opportunities for its members to share best practices and policies and offers various training and conference events.

NASWA Learning provides courses and certifications custom-designed for busy workforce development professionals.

» About NASWA -
https://www.naswa.org/services/learning

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

URL: https://www.ncsl.org/

NCSL aims to strengthen the effectiveness, independence, and integrity of U.S. legislatures and foster interstate and international cooperation. Serving legislatures and staffers in each U.S. state, territory, and commonwealth, NCSL offers bipartisan policy research, training resources, technical assistance, and networking opportunities, notably through the NCSL Legislative Summit. The organization is funded and sponsored by various sources, including government grants, membership dues, private donations, and over 100 sponsors like the Chamber of Progress, Pearson, Code.org, and Walmart.

Though not its sole focus, NCSL actively engages in workforce development and education issues, including the quality of non-degree credentials. It aids state legislatures in policy development by convening experts, conducting research, providing technical assistance, and offering state legislative policy analysis on credentialing. The organization emphasizes the state legislative interest in credentials that meet workforce needs, align with industry standards, are recognized by employers, and lead to meaningful career pathways. The types of non-degree credentials NCSL focuses on depend on each state's specific policy needs and workforce development goals, ranging from industry certifications and licenses to microcredentials and digital badges.

To fulfill its mission, NCSL invests in comprehensive research and analysis across various policy areas, organizes summits and meetings, and provides educational resources. NCSL collaborates with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, workforce agencies, industry groups, and policy think tanks, often engaging in joint projects and information-sharing initiatives. Its influence extends to local, state, and national levels, affecting legislative bodies, government agencies, educational institutions, and various industry and policy organizations. NCSL operates across all 50 U.S. states, addressing each state's unique policy challenges and priorities.

» Building the Workforce: State Leaders Explore CTE Options (2022) - https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/building-the-workforce-state-leaders-explore-cte-options

» Credentials of Value (2023) - https://www.ncsl.org/education/credentials-of-value

» Measuring the Quality of Nondegree Credentials (2023) - https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/measuring-the-quality-of-nondegree-credentials

» State Approaches to Nondegree Credentials (2023) - https://www.ncsl.org/education/state-approaches-to-nondegree-credentials

National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)

URL: https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/Accreditation/Earn-Accreditation/NCCA

NCCA is an accrediting body under the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. NCCA's mission is to ensure the public's health, welfare, and safety by accrediting certification programs that assess professional competency. Its ultimate goal is to develop and implement standards that serve as a benchmark for accrediting certification programs across all professions and industries. NCCA has designed the "Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs" to highlight critical elements essential for high-quality certification programs.

NCCA's standards are the first to be developed by the credentialing industry for professional certification programs, making the organization an early leader in setting industry standards for non-degree credential quality. The organization's process for accrediting certification programs involves evaluating their structure and governance, psychometric soundness, and the rights and responsibilities of test takers to ensure they meet rigorous criteria. By complying with NCCA Standards, certification bodies across a broad spectrum of professions and industries affirm a commitment to quality and best practices. Examples of organizations impacted by NCCA accreditation include the American Council on Exercise, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the Board of Pharmacy Specialties.

NCCA works with organizations that administer certification programs and other bodies focused on professional standards and quality assurance. Although NCCA does not work specifically with individual states, its accreditation is recognized nationally, and state regulatory bodies frequently rely on its accredited certifications. NCCA's work impacts certified professionals across all U.S. states and involves partnerships that may include other accrediting bodies, industry associations, and regulatory authorities, all aligned to meet federal requirements.

>> Job Analysis: Beyond the Basics (Carroll, 2017) - https://www.credentialinginsights.org/Article/job-analysis-beyond-the-basics

>> NCCA Resources - https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/Accreditation/Earn-Accreditation/NCCA/Processes-Resources#Resources

Occupational Licensing Policy Learning Consortium (OLPLC)

URL: https://licensing.csg.org/the-consortium/

OLPLC is dedicated to identifying challenges in occupational licensure and assisting states in finding and implementing solutions. Initiated by the Council of State Governments, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors Association, OLPLC aims to work closely with states to educate them on best practices in occupational licensing. Its ultimate objective is to help states establish occupational licensing standards that are accessible for all, including significantly underrepresented populations.

OLPLC plays a vital role in the quality of non-degree credentials by scrutinizing state policies related to occupational licensing. It evaluates barriers to obtaining licenses and strives to ensure that licensing requirements neither present disproportionate burden nor limit competition while maintaining the quality and competency of professionals in various fields. OLPLC also facilitates communication and problem-solving among states on occupational licensing issues. It conducts research, offers technical assistance, and organizes meetings to discuss challenges and solutions in occupational licensing. OLPLC's focus is primarily on occupational licenses, a non-degree credential covering professions ranging from healthcare to skilled trades.

As of 2022, OLPLC includes Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, and Wisconsin. It collaborates with key partners like the Council of State Governments and the National Governors Association to review state policies and share best practices. OLPLC's work has a broad influence, affecting state governments, licensing boards, professional associations, and other stakeholders in the occupational licensing process.

» Occupational Licensing Final Report: Assessing State Policies and Practices - https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/occupational-licensing-final-report

» Policy - https://compacts.csg.org/policy/

» Publications - https://compacts.csg.org/publications/

National Governors Association (NGA)

URL: https://www.nga.org/

NGA is the primary resource to assist governors in addressing priority issues and challenges related to local, national, and global public policy and governance. With the ultimate goal of providing timely research and solutions to emergent challenges, the NGA promotes visionary state leadership, shares best practices, and speaks with a collective voice on national policy.

As part of its broader focus on workforce development, education, and economic competitiveness, NGA engages in initiatives to improve the quality of non-degree credentials. While the organization does not define non-degree credential quality, its approach includes sharing best practices, developing policy recommendations, and facilitating state-to-state collaboration. The organization's work has far-reaching influence, affecting state and federal governments, associations of state officials, educational institutions, and other private sector organizations.

NGA collaborates with a range of partners across four tiers—Platinum (e.g., Google, LinkedIn, Walmart), Gold (e.g., SAS Institute Inc., Adobe, Business Roundtable), Silver (e.g., Cognia, American Institutes for Research, Lockheed Martin), and Bronze (e.g., Intuit, State Government Affairs Council, Imagine Learning). These partnerships aim to fulfill NGA's mission and objectives. The association works with governors from all 55 states, territories, and commonwealths of the United States, as well as with state education agencies, workforce development boards, and industry associations.

> » Governors Leading on Skills-Based Hiring to Open Opportunity Pathways (2023) - https://www.nga.org/news/commentary/governors-leading-on-skills-based-hiring-to-open-opportunity-pathways/

> » Lessons Learned in Workforce Innovation: How Ten Governors Are Redesigning Workforce Systems for Better Employment Outcomes (2022) - https://www.nga.org/publications/lessons-learned-in-workforce-innovation/

> » Skills and Credentials (2021) - https://www.nga.org/issues/skills-and-credentials/

> » State Policy Playbook to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (2022) - https://www.nga.org/publications/state-policy-playbook-to-advance-youth-apprenticeship/

> » Understanding Quality: The Role of States in Supporting Quality Non-Degree Credentials (2020) - https://www.nga.org/publications/understanding-quality-the-role-of-states-in-supporting-quality-non-degree-credentials/

National Skills Coalition (NSC)

URL: https://nationalskillscoalition.org/

NSC advocates for a national commitment to inclusive, high-quality skills training so that more people have access to a better life, and more local businesses see sustained growth. Since 2000, through expert analysis and technical assistance, broad-based organizing, targeted advocacy, and cutting-edge communications, NSC has sought to change state and federal skills policies to improve lives and grow local businesses and economies. NSC builds networks representing businesses, workers, colleges, community organizations, public officials, and advocates. NSC engages these networks to craft policy proposals and mobilize them to win concrete policy change. NSC's networks include SkillSPAN (20 state affiliate coalitions), Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships (BLU, including thousands of small and medium-sized business owners and seven state affiliates), and Voices for Skills (tens of thousands of workers and grassroots skills advocates).

NSC's state policy technical assistance initiatives, SkillSPAN network, and Business Leaders United coalition have worked with nearly 20 states to advance new policy and investment in quality assurance and financial assistance for quality non-degree credentials to advance economic mobility and equity for the adults and students of color pursuing them. NSC's work with states is guided by a set of consensus quality criteria that are intended to reflect standards for non-degree credentials that are most valuable for workers and businesses and to enable the evaluation of whether credential seekers experience equitable outcomes. In addition to NSC's efforts to help states develop and implement quality assurance frameworks for non-degree credentials, it is working to ensure states have the right data, capacities, and reporting tools and practices to measure and report on non-degree credential quality and the equity of learner outcomes.

NSC's work engages higher education, workforce development, data agencies, economic development, community college institutions and systems, postsecondary and workforce agencies, and community-based organizations, as well as employers, industry representatives, and other stakeholders invested in quality credentials and pathways that lead to good jobs. Its technical assistance academies focused on quality non-degree credentials have included 13 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Virginia. It also engages with national partners like Credential Engine, Data Quality Campaign, and National Governors Association.

» The Non-Degree Credential Quality Imperative - https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/the-non-degree-credential-quality-imperative/

» Creating an Impact with Credential Quality and Transparency - https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NSC-credential-quality_toolkit_final.pdf

» Expanding Opportunities: Defining Quality Non-Degree Credentials for States - https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/expanding-opportunities-defining-quality-non-degree-credentials-for-states/

» Measuring Non-Degree Credential Attainment (2018) -
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED607434.pdf

» Emerging Innovations in Data Transparency, Governance & Quality -
https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/emerging-innovations-in-data-transparency-
governance-quality/

» Data for an Inclusive Economic Recovery -
https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/data-for-an-inclusive-economic-recovery/

» Making Information about Credentials More Actionable through Increased Transparency and Quality
Assurance (with Credential Engine) -
https://credentialengine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Policy-Brief-4-Quality.pdf

National Student Clearinghouse

URL: https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/

The National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) aims to meet the demands for educational and workforce data in a way that is transparent, cost-effective, and easily accessible. With a mission to provide a variety of stakeholders—including students, institutions, policymakers, and states—with valuable data and insights, the it focuses on four core service areas: data exchange, financial aid, research, and verification.

The Clearinghouse plays a pivotal role in the quality of non-degree credentials by tracking and verifying them through its verification services. It provides accurate, authentic, and relevant data that is important in educational and employment contexts. Its services include degree verification, enrollment verification, and research reports. The organization works with academic institutions, employers, government agencies, and other organizations that require verifying and tracking all educational credentials, including non-degree credentials such as certificates and certifications.

The Clearinghouse collaborates with a range of partners to fulfill its mission. These partners are divided into three categories: strategic partners (e.g., EAB, Ellucian, National College Attainment Network), general partners (e.g., ACT, College Board), and association partners (e.g., American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, American Association of Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education). Its scope of influence extends across educational institutions, employers, government agencies, and other entities at local, state, and national levels across all 50 states.

- » Learning Employment Records: The Transcript of the Future - https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/learningemploymentrecord/?hilite=nondegree+credential+quality

- » Pilot Program Studies Matching Up Industry Credential Attainment, Enrollment, and Degree Data to Identify New Learner Pathways - https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/nscblog/pilot-program-studies-matching-up-industry-credential-attainment-enrollment-and-degree-data-to-identify-new-learner-pathways/

New America

URL: https://www.newamerica.org/

New America is a nonprofit nonpartisan public policy institute that seeks to address the next generation of challenges facing the United States. The Education Policy Program seeks to use original research and policy analysis to contribute solutions to the nation's education problems and to serve as a trusted source of objective analysis and innovative ideas for policymakers, educators, and the public at large. Within the Education Policy Program, the Higher Education program sits alongside the Center on Education and Labor, which includes the community college team. The Higher Education program focuses on federal policy to support students to and through a quality program. The Center on Education and Labor focuses on the connection between education and work. This shows up in the community college team that works to advance racial and gender equity through community-engaged research, storytelling, convening, policy analysis, and advocacy. The Center believes an equitable community college ecosystem can advance educational access and completion, economic security, and personal fulfillment. The community college team delves into the nuances of what constitutes a high-quality program and explores how policy can bolster such initiatives, ensuring graduates achieve favorable employment outcomes.

New America's involvement in the realm of non-degree credential quality is multi-dimensional. Its strategy revolves around championing student rights and guaranteeing access to stellar educational experiences. It engages in policy analysis and delivers state and federal recommendations to fortify high-caliber programs and augment student outcomes. Research is a cornerstone of its approach. It delves deep into the quality metrics of non-degree programs, pinpointing factors that are hallmarks of quality and analyzing how policy modifications can elevate them. Specifically, the community college team at New America considers how community colleges can better create and offer high-quality non-degree programs and how state and federal policy can support that. The higher education program focuses on policy with an emphasis on the quality of education and the intricacies of federal subsidies. The higher education team has been a vocal participant in dialogues about gainful employment regulations, short-term Pell grants, and evaluations of which initiatives deserve federal subsidies and quality markers.

New America, in its mission to amplify the quality of non-degree credentials, collaborates extensively with colleges, policy entities at the state level, and other stakeholders in non-degree education. Its sphere of influence encompasses advocating for policy transitions, disseminating its research findings, offering consultations, and supporting endeavors to refine non-degree credential quality. Through these collaborations and its research, New America seeks to impact policymakers, governmental bodies, educational establishments, and nonprofit organizations.

> » How to Deliver High-Quality, Non-Degree Workforce Community College Programs - https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/briefs/how-to-deliver-high-quality-non-degree-workforce-community-college-programs/

> » How to Plan High-Quality, Non-Degree Workforce Programs at Community Colleges - https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/briefs/how-to-plan-high-quality-non-degree-workforce-programs-at-community-colleges/

» How to Use Data to Improve Non-Degree Workforce Programs at Community Colleges - https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/briefs/how-to-use-data-to-improve-non-degree-workforce-programs-at-community-colleges/

» Other resources - https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/collections/accelerating-quality-new-models-for-career-preparation-at-community-colleges/

New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE)

URL: https://www.neche.org

Established in 1885, NECHE, formerly the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education New England Association of Schools and Colleges, is an authority and independent voice on the quality of higher education. Recognized as an institutional accreditor by the U.S. Department of Education, NECHE is a voluntary, peer-based, non-governmental membership association, comprised of approximately 200 degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions offering higher education both nationally and internationally. NECHE promotes educational excellence and quality assurance with its membership through its Standards of Accreditation designed to ensure quality, innovation, and student success. The core mission of NECHE has dual purposes: quality assurance and institutional improvement. NECHE ensures that institutions or programs meet specific quality standards by thoroughly evaluating their ability to provide quality education and meet the established standards for higher education through a process of peer review. NECHE assists institutions in enhancing their performance and capabilities by encouraging continuous improvement and development, enabling institutions to evolve and better serve their students and academic communities. NECHE consists of faculty, administrators, and trustees from member institutions as well as members of the public.

NECHE is developing a quality assurance framework for noncredit programs offered by higher education institutions that lead to a variety of non-degree credentials. This Lumina Foundation–funded effort seeks to define markers of quality in noncredit programs to develop a general framework that will help institutions identify goals and markers of quality in these programs. NECHE staff have gathered feedback from stakeholders and compiled case studies from institutions to develop this framework, which will be discussed by NECHE for possible endorsement. The framework addresses several issues related to noncredit programs including curriculum oversight in terms of how programs address employer needs and educational pathways, instructor qualifications and industry experience, support systems for noncredit learners, institutional resources available to noncredit programs, and measures of student success.

NECHE's influence ranges from the Commission and educational institutions to evaluators, state representatives, and national bodies. The envisaged framework aims to be flexible and expansive, applicable to two-year and four-year educational establishments.

> » Draft Quality Assurance Framework and institutional case studies are available on the NECHE website.

> » Institution Reports & Evaluations - https://www.neche.org/institution-reports-evaluations/

> » Standards for Accreditation - https://www.neche.org/standards-for-accreditation/

Non-degree Credential Research Network (NCRN)

URL: https://gwipp.gwu.edu/non-degree-credentials-research-network-ncrn

NCRN is a project funded through a grant from the Lumina Foundation and managed by researchers at the George Washington Institute of Public Policy. NCRN is a multi-disciplinary community of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers focusing on the little-understood role of certificates, certifications, and other non-degree credentials in the labor market. The purpose of NCRN is to clarify what is known about these credentials and to certify them within the broader credentialing ecosystem. It also determines what new research is needed, identifies lessons learned in research and implications for policy and practice, and shares findings with practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Members of NCRN study non-degree credentialing—including licenses, industry-awarded certifications, certificates, apprenticeships, and microcredentials—and provide relevant information to the learn-and-work ecosystem regarding what credentials are being offered and their value in the labor market. The primary aim of this work is to synthesize and disseminate research findings for a broader audience.

NCRN consists of 320 researchers and stakeholders who meet to discuss new and ongoing research projects and opportunities for collaboration. It has progressed with its work through a monthly webinar series, stepped-up communications efforts (report-writing, blogging, and improving its website), and research collaborations.

» Non-Degree Credentials Research (Zotero Archive) - https://www.zotero.org/groups/2382058/non-degree_credentials_research

» Non-Degree Credentials Research Network: Publications - https://gwipp.gwu.edu/publications-2

» What We Know About Non-degree Credentials: A Literature Scan (2019) - https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs6111/files/downloads/062319NCRNLiteratureScan.pdf

Open Badges

URL: https://openbadges.org/

Open Badges began as an initiative by Mozilla to develop a standardized system for issuing, earning, and displaying digital badges that represent skills, achievements, and knowledge across various learning environments. The core mission of Open Badges is to recognize and validate diverse learning experiences, whether formal, informal, or nontraditional. By offering digital badges, Open Badges aims to make learning achievements visible, empower learner mobility, and promote lifelong learning.

Open Badges provides a platform to recognize achievements outside the traditional education system. Its badges are digital representations of skills, competencies, or milestones achieved. By offering a structured and standardized way to issue and display these badges, Open Badges ensures that they are verifiable and meaningful, enhancing their quality and credibility in the eyes of employers, educators, and peers.

While Open Badges started as a Mozilla initiative, it has expanded into a broader movement, with numerous organizations, institutions, and entities adopting the standard to issue and recognize badges. The ecosystem includes educational institutions, online course providers, workshops, and various organizations that offer skill-building opportunities. Open Badges collaborates with these entities to ensure a consistent, standardized approach to recognizing achievements.

- » Badge Count Report 2022 - https://content.1edtech.org/badge-count-2022/findings

- » Open Badges Trends - https://openbadges.org/extend

QA Commons

URL: https://theqacommons.org

Founded in 2016, the mission of QA Commons is to ensure that all learners are equipped for the evolving workforce dynamics, emphasizing "Essential Employability Qualities" (EEQs). Also known as "soft," "transferrable," or "human" skills, the EEQs represent the qualities employers report as being critically important but most difficult to find and develop in their employees. QA Commons' work is centered on an Employability Framework consisting of five standards of care for educational programs seeking to ensure their completers are prepared to succeed in the workplace and advance through a career: EEQ Preparation, Employer Engagement, Learner Engagement, Integrated Support Services, and Transparency of Outcomes. By instituting quality standards, recognizing the trajectory of skills-based hiring, and advocating for the acknowledgment of microcredentials, QA Commons seeks to foster a skilled labor force and bolsters individuals in realizing their vocational aspirations. The organization's services include professional development, learner employability badging (via Credly), program enhancement, and consulting.

QA Commons has worked on non-degree credential quality since 2021. Notably, the organization developed a methodological process for noncredit quality assurance for Shippensburg University's Office of Workforce Development. That set of materials consisted of (1) a course development proposal form allowing faculty and/or employers to formally pitch a noncredit course for university approval; (2) a labor market guide to assessing economic need and employer engagement, and (3) an instructor interview protocol to gauge teaching aptitude and content knowledge.

QA Commons collaborates with a diverse range of entities, including two-year colleges, four-year universities, noncredit education providers, workforce development boards, and state departments like the Department of Corrections.

» Shippensburg University: A Leader in Noncredit Teaching and Learning -
https://theqacommons.org/shippensburg-university-a-leader-in-noncredit-teaching-and-learning/

Quality Matters (QM)

URL: https://www.qualitymatters.org

QM is committed to employing research in formulating standards for course design and devising a criterion for appraising the quality of online courses. Its mission pivots around ensuring that online courses are meticulously designed, are accessible, and resonate with learning objectives and evaluations. The organization places a significant emphasis on perpetual improvement, furnishing feedback to aid instructors in refining its courses. An integral part of its mission, as articulated, is "helping institutions or entities deliver on its online promise" to render online learning universally accessible. A core principle of the QM rubric is not an absolute quest for perfection but an ongoing betterment of courses, entailing iterative teaching cycles and periodic rubric evaluations.

Within the broader canvas of QM, the Instructional Designer Association (IDA) champions the significance of non-degree credential quality. IDA propounds the pivotal role of instructional designers in curating course design and facilitating online learning. This underscores the necessity of instructional designers in elucidating the methodology and best practices intrinsic to online education. QM's rubric, now in its 7th edition, caters to degree programs and non-degree credentials. It acknowledges the escalating interest in noncredit, non-degree curricula, and microcredentials. Meeting expectations in terms of quality is denoted by securing a score of 85 or more on a course-specific basis, with continuous improvement and accessibility being cornerstones of quality.

QM's endeavors predominantly resonate with higher education institutions, particularly in online course quality assessment. Consequently, its influence encompasses faculty members, instructional designers, and educational entities immersed in online pedagogy.

» Quality Matters -
https://www.qualitymatters.org/research

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

URL: https://sheeo.org

SHEEO is the national association of the chief executives of statewide governing, policy, and coordinating boards of postsecondary education. SHEEO seeks to advance public policies and academic practices that enable all Americans to attain higher levels of education and achieve economic and social mobility. The organization serves its members as an advocate for state policy leadership, a liaison between states and the federal government, and a conduit for sharing policy and practice information.

While SHEEO primarily focuses on higher education policy and advocacy, the organization recognizes the importance of all postsecondary credentials, including non-degree credentials, in achieving economic and social mobility. SHEEO works to ensure that these credentials are of high quality, relevant to the workforce, and aligned with the needs of both students and employers. By advocating for effective state policies, SHEEO promotes the value, recognition, and transferability of non-degree credentials within the broader postsecondary education landscape.

Announced October 2023, the SHEEO Noncredit Mobility Academy will support states as they build capacity to better realize the potential of noncredit education and increase economic mobility for learners who begin their postsecondary journey through noncredit programming. It is a partnership with Education Strategy Group and Opportunity America. The academy is a two-year initiative of four to six states with the goal of building the data and policy infrastructure needed to increase economic mobility for students in noncredit programs. State teams will include members of the SHEEO agency, the state workforce system, and institutions that offer noncredit education. The broad goals of the academy are to expand understanding of the value of noncredit education as a precursor to further education and to identify and promote best practices to serve as a model for the field.

SHEEO collaborates with various stakeholders, including state higher education entities, higher education institutions, federal agencies, policymakers, and other national organizations focused on education and workforce development. These partnerships aim to shape and influence higher education policy at both the state and national levels, ensuring that it is responsive to the evolving needs of students, employers, and society at large.

> » The Noncredit Mobility Academy - https://sheeo.org/project/noncredit-mobility-academy/

> » The Power of a Promise: Implications and Importance of Adult Promise Programs (Carlson & Lederman, 2018) - http://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Adult-Promise-White-Paper-The-Power-of-a-Promise.pdf

> » SHEEO Publications - https://sheeo.org/project/sheeo-publications/

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Foundation

URL: https://www.shrm.org/foundation/Pages/default.aspx

The SHRM Foundation is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit branch of the Society for Human Resource Management. Established in 1966, the SHRM Foundation has a mission to elevate and empower Human Resource (HR) professionals as a force for social good. Its goal is to furnish HR professionals with innovative practices that advocate for equity and pave broader pathways to employment. Focus areas include widening pathways to work and skills-based hiring. Widening pathways to work involves collaborating with employers to understand and utilize untapped talent from diverse backgrounds, such as previously incarcerated individuals, military families, people with disabilities, older workers, and opportunity youth. Skills-based hiring comes under the umbrella of the Whole Human Hiring initiative, which aims to support employers in realizing the significance of diverse skills and aptitudes and implementing inclusive hiring practices. In addition, the SHRM Foundation's efforts are guided by both business and moral perspectives, harmonizing the advantages for employers by creating inclusive work environments.

The SHRM Foundation probes the obstacles impeding skills-based hiring and champions the cause of quality and trustworthiness in non-degree credentials. It collaborates with employers to devise strategies and methodologies for pinpointing eligible candidates. The SHRM Foundation offers insights to HR professionals through research and data scrutiny, accentuating the merits of skills-based hiring. It also furnishes education and resources to foster the adoption of these hiring practices.

The SHRM Foundation collaborates with significant entities like Google, IBM, and MIT to bolster its mission and impact. Its influence spans large organizations and advocates for small and mid-sized employers. Its endeavors are supplemented by partnerships that stress the tangible benefits for businesses and the ethical implications, thereby ensuring a wholesome, inclusive workplace for all.

> » Skilled Credentials At Work -
> https://www.shrm.org/foundation/Pages/skilled-credentials.aspx

University Professional Continuing Education Association (UPCEA)

URL: https://upcea.edu

UPCEA champions the cause of nontraditional, adult, and external education. It emphasizes quality in non-degree credentials, advocating for learner-centric methodologies and highlighting the significance of involving employers in quality discussions. UPCEA's mission is to support nontraditional external education, including adult learners and non-degree education. This support predominantly targets continuing education, degree completion, and online and non-degree education. The association's advocacy efforts are directed at these domains and provide professional development assistance for faculty and staff. It accentuates the importance of quality and relevance in academic programs, endorsing increased engagement and cooperation between educational institutions and employers.

UPCEA has a strong role in professional, continuing, and online staff at an institution, helping them develop for leadership and management roles within their organizations. It also helps with the development of staff to better identify and develop new programs that meet a need in the marketplace, as well as how to support them—e.g., marketing, enrollment management, and retention. UPCEA also promotes the idea that quality standards should be developed to meet the needs of the student, employer, industry, or other stakeholders. The association is known for staff development at many institutions, such as a dean or director in PCO, a marketer, a program manager, or an instructional designer.

While UPCEA does not directly set or regulate quality standards for non-degree credentials, it is vital in cultivating a culture valuing quality through collaboration and innovation. It emphasizes involving employers in quality deliberations, utilizing metrics for evaluation, and adopting learner-centric strategies. UPCEA advocates for institutions to challenge traditional paradigms of quality assessment, emphasizing the need to monitor performance metrics and outcomes. Additionally, UPCEA dedicates efforts to studying employer perspectives on educational quality and recommends institutions collaborate with employers, possibly through advisory boards and partnerships, in the discourse on quality.

UPCEA's influence is manifested through various channels: advocacy, professional development programs, and sharing research insights. Its work affects many stakeholders, including associations, professional groups, consortiums, employers, governmental entities, HR professionals, third-party providers, accrediting bodies, young adults, students, and higher educational establishments. Key strategies promoted by UPCEA include digital badging initiatives, stackable credential models, noncredit-to-credit transfer mechanisms, and active engagement with adult learners. However, it is worth noting that there are recognized gaps in tracking outcomes, quality assurance processes, and innovation within institutions.

- » Professional, Continuing, & Online Education - https://upcea.edu/resources/

- » UPCEA Learning: Product Catalog - https://elevate.upcea.edu/catalog

Workcred

URL: https://www.workcred.org/

Workcred is an independent nonprofit organization established to strengthen workforce quality by improving the credentialing system. The primary mission of Workcred is to enhance the role of industry- and employer-recognized credentials in the labor market. By doing so, Workcred aims to ensure that credentials are both industry-relevant and a trustworthy representation of one's skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Workcred is involved in researching, developing, and promoting quality assurance practices for credentials. The organization ensures that industry and employer-recognized credentials are high-quality, relevant, and valued in the labor market. Through various initiatives, Workcred seeks to improve these credentials' understanding, transparency, and comparability.

Workcred collaborates with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, certification bodies, licensing boards, and other organizations involved in workforce development. These partnerships aim to bridge gaps, foster dialogue, and create alignment between the world of education and the needs of the industry. Workcred's scope extends to various industries and sectors, giving its initiatives a broad-reaching impact.

» Publications and Events: Reports - https://workcred.org/Publications-and-Events/Reports.aspx

» Understanding Quality: The Role of States in Supporting Quality Non-Degree Credentials - https://workcred.org/Documents/Understanding-Quality-Workcred-NGA-Report-2020.pdf

» The Reality and Potential of Certifications to Support Workforce and Economic Mobility: New Report Series Reveals How Versatile Certifications Can Be - https://workcred.org/publications-and-events/workcred-news/the-reality-and-potential-of-certifications-to-support-workforce-and-economic-mobility

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