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State-Level Noncredit Data Definitions

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The rising interest in short-term training leading directly to employment has raised the profile of noncredit education among both policymakers and the public. Yet, despite this interest, data on noncredit educational offerings have not been systematically collected. The lack of data has limited the ability to examine important questions about noncredit education, such as its value to individuals, employers, and the economy at large. Policymakers need access to research that explains how noncredit is working (or not) in their area if they are to create sound policies to support or make changes to this increasingly popular form of education. To begin to address this issue, several states have begun building a noncredit data infrastructure.

Through an ongoing effort to better understand the state-level noncredit data infrastructure, we have engaged in a project with partners from Iowa, Louisiana, and Virginia to achieve the following:

1. Develop an inventory of, and develop consistent operational definitions for, state-level noncredit data elements to better understand the noncredit data infrastructure;
2. Collect and examine noncredit course/program-level data to explore noncredit offerings and their associations with enrollment rates, outcomes, instructional characteristics, and financial arrangements; and
3. Uncover the drivers of noncredit offerings and produce relevant policy implications.

We embarked on this project with our state partners in 2021 with support from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation (NSF). The important preliminary steps were to explain what data are captured in three states with established noncredit data systems, then to develop a set of clear data definitions that set parameters for states to generate datasets to inform state noncredit data reports.

The table below represents the work done with our three partner states to identify state-level data elements and generate operational definitions for each. The definitions were informed by external sources, our prior research on community college noncredit education, and feedback from state partners. Ultimately, we hope that these definitions, as they are shared and further revised over time, will offer guidance to a learning community of states working toward the common goal of improving noncredit data collection, and that they will help states achieve consistency across data sets.

Table 1: State-Level Noncredit Data Definitions

| Category | Subcategory | Definition |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Field of Study | Course/Program Name | College- or state-level name for noncredit course |
| | CIP Code | 2, 4, or 6-digit CIP Codes ¹ |
| | SOC Code | Standard Occupation Code (SOC) ² |
| | Career Cluster | Course/program alignment with 16 Career Clusters ³ |
| Noncredit Type ^{4,5} | Occupational Training | "Noncredit occupational training is geared toward individuals seeking to gain or improve job skills leading to initial or better employment. These courses are most often available through an open registration process, do not follow a typical semester schedule, and are paid for by individuals through either their own resources or through third-party funding for which they are eligible." |
| | Sponsored Occupational (Contract) Training | "Similar to occupational training ... arranged by special contract with organizations ... can be specific training developed for an organization, or it can lead to some particular industry-based standard ...delivered in a way most convenient for the contracting organization ... responds directly to local area needs" |
| | Pre-College | "Primary courses/programs delivered include ABE, ESL instruction, GED preparation, and even some aspects of developmental studies. These are typically offered at no charge to the student other than testing fees, supplies, etc." |
| | Personal Interest | "Common examples include ballroom dancing, cake decorating, and the like ... are demand driven, because students likely self-pay, and often reflect the needs, interests, and priorities of local communities" |
| Non-Degree Credentials | Industry Certification | Industry certifications are "awarded by industry certification bodies" and "awarded for third-party, independent competency assessment" ⁶ |
| | Occupational Licensure | Licenses are "awarded by government agencies" and "awarded for meeting requirements of an occupation" ⁶ |
| | College-Issued Certificate | Certificates are offered by many entities including education providers such as community colleges. Certificates can be awarded for participation, completion, achievement, or by assessment. ⁶ |
| | Microcredentials | "Microcredentials verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved. They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible time spans and tend to be more narrowly focused." ⁷ |
| | Apprenticeship | Noncredit offering is part of the <i>related instruction</i> provided for a DOL-registered apprenticeship. ⁸ |
| Student Outcomes | Students Continue to Credit | Are data available to determine if noncredit students enroll in credit courses/programs? |
| | Completion Data Availability | Are course/program completion data available? If completion data are available, what type (pass/fail, grades, complete/not complete, credential earned)? |
| | Pre-Enrollment Employment | Are pre-enrollment employment data available by course/program? |
| | Post-Enrollment Employment | Are post-enrollment employment data available by course/program? |

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| | Pre-Enrollment Salary/Wage | Are pre-enrollment salary/wage data available by course/program? |
| | Post-Employment Salary/Wage | Are post-enrollment salary/wage data available by course/program? |
| Program Length and Admission | Number of Courses if Multi-Course Program | Number of noncredit courses required to complete a noncredit program |
| | Total Contact (Clock) Hours | "A period of time consisting of (1) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; (2) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period; or (3) Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course" ⁹ ; required contact hours for each single-unit-offering course/program and for multi-course program |
| | Admission Requirements | Is a prerequisite required for enrollment? Is a minimum test score required for enrollment? Is there a minimum age for enrollment? |
| Delivery | Face-to-Face | Is the course/program offered face-to-face (FTF)? |
| | Face-to-Face Location | Is a course/program with an F2F component offered on-campus, industry site, or other off campus location? |
| | Online | Is the course/program offered online? |
| | Blended | Is the course/program offered in blended/hybrid format? |
| | Competency-Based | Is the course/program competency-based? |
| | Work-Based Learning | Is work-based learning required for course/program completion? |
| | Student Service Availability | Is academic advising available to students in each course/program? Is career advising available to students in each course/program? Is other nonacademic support available to students in each course/program? |
| Finance | Course/Program Tuition | What is the tuition for each course/program in the most recent complete year? |
| | State Reimbursement | Is the course/program eligible for state formula, enrollment, or similar funding? |
| | WIOA Eligible Training Provider by Course/Program | Is the course/program eligible for funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)? WIOA is a federally funded program "designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy" ¹⁰ |
| | Economic Development Incentive | Is the course/program offered as a government-funded economic development incentive to an employer? |
| | Other Federal Grants | Are other federal grant funds available to support each course/program? |
| | Other State Grants | Are other state grant funds available to support each course/program? |
| | Faculty Data | Is course/program taught by permanent faculty who teach both credit and noncredit? Is course/program taught by permanent faculty who teach noncredit only? Is course/program taught by adjunct faculty? Is course/program taught by external/contract faculty? |
| Enrollment and Identifiers | Headcount | Are headcount data available for each course/program? What is the unduplicated headcount for the most recent complete year? |
| | Race/Ethnicity | Are student race/ethnicity data collected for each course/program? What is the enrollment by race/ethnicity in the most recent complete year? |
| | Age | Are student age data collected for each course/program? What is the median age of participants in each course/program? |

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| Sex/Gender | Are student sex/gender data collected for each course/program? What is the enrollment by sex/gender for the most recent complete year? |
| Social Security Number | Are SSNs collected for students in each course/program? |
| Institutional Identification Number | Are institutional IDs assigned for students in each course/program? |
| Names | Are student names collected for students in each course/program? |
| Birth Dates | Are student birth dates collected for students in each course/program? |

¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=55>

² https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/Perkins_IV_Crosswalk_Table_6_Cluster-Pathway-SOC-ONET-CIP.xls

³ <https://careertech.org/career-clusters/>;
https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/Perkins_IV_Crosswalk_Table_1_CIP_in_Pathways.xls

⁴ D'Amico, M. M. (2017). Noncredit education: Specialized programs to meet local needs. *New directions for community colleges*, 2017(180), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20281>

⁵ D'Amico, M. M., Morgan, G. B., Robertson, S., & Houchins, C. (2014). An exploration of noncredit community college enrollment. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 62(3), 152–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2014.953438>

⁶ Workcred. (2021). *How do credentials differ?* <https://workcred.org/Documents/How-Do-Credentials-Differ.pdf>

⁷ Educause. (n.d.). *Earn and display your microcredentials.* <https://www.educause.edu/microcredentialing/earn-and-display-your-microcredentials>

⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. *A quick-start toolkit: Building registered apprenticeship programs.* https://www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

⁹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2021–22). *Clock Hour* [Glossary entry]. IPEDS <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components-glossary/7>

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.) *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.* <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa>

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