2019 Request for Proposals

State Partnerships for Credential Transparency
Publishing to and Building Uses for the Credential Registry

Deadline: April 12, 2019

Background

Through an increasing array of credentials — such as degrees, certificates, licenses, certifications, badges, and apprenticeships — job seekers, students, and workers have more options than ever. Yet, there has never been an efficient system to collect, search, and compare credentials in a way that keeps pace with the speed of change in the 21st century and is universally understood. With well over 500,000 unique credentials in the U.S. alone, this lack of information contributes to confusion and uninformed decision making. Credential Engine is demystifying the credential marketplace by bringing both transparency and common understanding to credentials for the first time to provide information needed to make better credentialing decisions and reveal credentialing and labor trends.

Credential Engine provides the following web-based tools and services to find, understand, and compare information about credentials in a user-friendly format:
- Two schema, the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) and the Credential Transparency Description Language profile of the Achievement Standards Network (CTDL-ASN) provide the "rules of the road" for how credentials, credentialing organizations, quality assurance information, and competencies are described both in the Registry and on the open Web.
- The Credential Registry houses, manages, connects, and shares up-to-date information on all types of credentials in the marketplace.
- The Open Applications Marketplace allows organizations to build customized applications that use the Registry's data to access tailored credentialing information for many different user groups.

More information can be found at www.credentialengine.org. You may also search credentials that have been published on the Credential Registry, and consider the range of information collected about credentials, by visiting Credential Finder (www.credentialfinder.org).

RFP Overview

Credential Engine is working to scale the publishing of credential information to the Credential Registry. Currently, the following states are formally working with Credential Engine to make credentials in their state transparent: Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio, Kansas, Michigan, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine (these four New England states through a partnership with the New England Board of Higher Education), and the Los Angeles Region. Washington State will soon join this list. Each

of these states/regions has approached their projects in different ways; you can learn more about them at www.credentialengine.org/partner.

We anticipate that at least two to three states will be selected for a partnership through this RFP, though additional states may be selected if more funding becomes available.

Through this RFP, Credential Engine will support state initiatives that best address four major goals:

1. Significantly advance the mission of publishing all credentials offered in the state to the Registry and the open Web. Credential Engine recognizes that it may be preferable and more feasible in the pursuit of this goal for grantees to identify a set of targeted sectors to focus on initially, with the aim of expanding to other sectors and all credentials over time;
2. Identify, prioritize, and operationalize the use of information that is published to the Registry that allows states and stakeholders to improve services, practices, programs, and policies for the benefit of students, workers, veterans, employers, educators, policymakers and others to make more informed decisions about credentials in the marketplace;
3. Collect and match wage, employment, and employer preference information to these credentials within the state, to the greatest extent possible; and
4. To best ensure long-term data quality and sustainability, create plan to establish and maintain systems that allow credential providers to publish their credential data to the Credential Registry using an API, or through direct JSON-LD open-link data formats.

Eligible Applicants:

Proposals may come from a single state agency, a group of state agencies working together, or an organization that has established relationships with state institutions (internal or external to the state). The same applies for sub-state or cross-state regions. Credential Engine will consider only one proposal per state or region.

Regardless of the structure of the request, all selected grantees will be responsible for working with individual institutions and entities providing credentials in the state or region to coordinate the publication of credentials.

It is important to note that each provider of credentials, competency models, and quality assurance assertions — including, but not necessarily limited to, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, certification bodies, licensing boards, employers, apprenticeship programs, accreditation agencies — will need to establish an approved account with Credential Engine and either publish their credentials directly, grant approval to the grantee to publish on its behalf, or identify a third-party data management vendor to publish for them. Exact arrangements and work flows for publishing will be determined with each selection state/region and their credential providers.

Primary Responsibilities:

Selected grantees for these state initiatives will be responsible for:

- Developing use cases – the specific ways that the data and technology may be used – and plans for using the registry data within the state. This might include linkages to labor market demand, return on investment data, and others.
    - With support from Credential Engine team, incorporate data from the Registry into *at least* one current tool OR develop a new tool/application that uses Registry data.
- Identifying credential providers and credentials within the entire state/region or the sector(s) selected (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing, IT/cybersecurity) within the state/region.
    - Note: Credential Engine seeks credentials from all providers and all types of credentials. To that end, we are seeking to fund proposals able to successfully engage:
        - Providers: High schools/school districts, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities (public, private, for-profit), licensing bodies, certification bodies, badging organizations, apprenticeships (registered and unregistered), and any other credentialing organization.
        - Credential Types: diplomas, badges, certificates, licenses, certifications, microcredentials, degrees (two- and four-year degrees, masters, doctorates), and other emerging credential types.
- Coordinating outreach to institutions and organizations issuing credentials in the state to explain the value and applications of credential transparency and the state's/region's involvement.
- Working with Credential Engine and key stakeholders to establish a minimum data requirement for the work in the state/region (which must at least include Credential Engine's required minimum data level), and ensuring that all identified credentials are published at the minimum data requirements. Project leads are encouraged to identify additional data elements that are required through this project to support unique needs and goals of the project.
- If using a sector approach, encouraging institutions and organizations to publish additional credentials, as applicable.
- To the greatest extent possible, publish through the publishing assistant API or directly on the providers website using JSON-LD encoding to optimize search capabilities. If you plan to use a different publishing method to start, develop a plan to update data systems in the state to use JSON-LD.
- Work with state institutions to document which vendors and systems they use internally (i.e., course catalogue systems) and work with the Credential Engine team to develop relationships with those vendors and incorporate them into the publishing process, as appropriate.
- Outreach to relevant national credentialing organizations that are not already on the registry.
- Participate in regular state team meetings (conference calls), state working groups, and communicate any issues to Credential Engine team for troubleshooting.
- Publicize the project, its value, and specific benefits where and when applicable.
- Plan for the necessary means and strategies to ensure an enduring commitment to and availability of transparent data about credentials, their content, competencies, and labor market outcomes, in the state/region.

Credential Engine will provide technical assistance and support to grantees, which may include:

- Helping with outreach plans, and involvement with outreach as needed.
- Providing communications documents and helping state communications staff develop their own documents for outreach.
- Providing technical support for onboarding institutions/organizations and for publishing data to the registry.
- Convening regular progress meetings with state team.
- Convening working groups of all states to discuss best practices and troubleshoot issues.
- Assisting with the development of applications and services that use data from the Credential Registry to improve programs, services, and policies within the state.
- Assisting with supporting collaborative learning opportunities across all state partners.

Grant Amounts

Credential Engine will provide grants between $30,000 and $50,000 based on the scope of the project. All grants have a 50 percent matching requirement, which can consist of financial or in-kind resources, that is intended to help grantees leverage additional support for their work. Funds may be used to assist with meeting costs, data/software costs, staffing assistance, and other costs related to supporting this work.

Proposal Submission Information
Project Narrative (Up to 2,500 Words)

Submit a narrative request for assistance that describes the following items:
- Identify 3 – 5 priority use cases for the credential data specific to your state, and how you would use such data from the Registry. Include information about the relevant audience (ie., students, career counselors, employers), how the Registry data will solve current and future problems, and plans for implementation. Examples of use cases can be found here.
- If applicable, describe the industry sectors your project will focus on initially and estimate the number of credentials offered in the sector(s) that will be published to the Registry. You may choose one or more industry sectors. Please also include details about why the sector(s) are important in your state. Also, describe plans for how you might eventually publish all credentials in your state.
- Detail key credentialing organizations and higher education systems in your state. Include any relevant information about your agency's relationships with those institutions and systems.
- Describe your outreach plan to credentialing organizations, how you will work with them to publish their credentials, the publishing methods that are feasible, and any obstacles you might face in getting them to publish.
- Indicate the method(s) you would employ to inventory the relevant credentials to be published, and any known databases or repositories of the data that might be used.

- Describe plans for sustaining the availability of and easy access to transparent data about all credentials, including their content, competencies, and outcomes, and how such data will be used in tools and services to meet the needs of consumers of all types.
- Outline a brief timeline of the project
- Provide brief bio's for the key staff that will lead this work.
- Add information about any additional related initiatives.

Budget (Up to 500 words)

Provide a proposed budget of up to $50,000, with an additional 50% in matching funding from other sources. Include with your budget a short narrative describing how the funding will be used.

How to Apply

Submit proposals to info@credentialengine.org by April 12, 2019. Applicants are encouraged to forward questions to Emilie Rafal at erafal@credentialengine.org.