Navigating the Credential Marketplace: A How-to Guide

A wide range of credentials—from certificates, certifications, and licenses to badges, apprenticeships, and degrees of all types and levels—have value for individuals and employers in the marketplace. Credential Engine estimates that there nearly 1,000,000 unique credentials in the United States alone.

The number of both traditional and non-degree credentials is exploding, but as programs proliferate, it becomes more difficult to acquire information about the precise skills and abilities they develop, the pathways they support, and their impact on employment and earnings outcomes. At the same time, today's economy is in constant flux, bringing changing demands for skills and credentials. To keep up with these changing landscapes, there emerges an obvious need for and value of a common credential description language and a Credential Registry that is updated in real time to ensure that everyone can make informed decisions about education and career pathways. Credential providers, policymakers, employers, and regulatory agencies all have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Tackling credential transparency takes everyone. Join us!

TAKE ACTION

Credential and competency providers (education and training providers, employers offering certificates, or anyone issuing credentials and competencies)

- **Publish to the Credential Registry.** A robust library of credential data, which uses a common language and is searchable and updated in real time, is essential for creating better policies, making more informed decisions, and improving individual decision-making. Explore how to start publishing your credential and competency information.

- **Use the Credential Transparency Description Language.** Until now, there has not been a common language available to describe all credentials and competencies, making it difficult for employers, students, and policymakers to compare costs, pathways, relevance, and credential outcomes. Credential Engine and its partners have developed an open-source schema—the Credential Transparency Description Language, or CTDL—creating a dictionary of terms that provides a common approach to describing all types and levels of credentials, from diplomas, badges, certificates,

and apprenticeships to licenses, certifications, and degrees. The CTDL powers the Credential Registry, but also can be used on the open web to power information gathering. Get started using the CTDL to describe your credentials.

- **Make informed decisions with open data.** Build and use applications that leverage open credential data to help better understand trends in the marketplace, differentiate your offerings, describe how your credentials are part of broader pathways, improve navigation and guidance tools for learners and job seekers, and solve other pressing challenges.

Policymakers

- **Enact policy solutions that champion transparency.** Local, state, and federal decision-makers can adopt system, regulatory, and legislative solutions that will help scale and solidify credential transparency efforts, expand adoption of the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL), and continue to build a complete and comprehensive Credential Registry for all credential offerings. Policy-focused solutions can be implemented at every level to support this work.

- **Encourage participation in the Credential Registry.** Decision-makers within local, state, and federal governments—especially those who work in education and workforce agencies (e.g. Department of Education, Department of Labor, Workforce Board)—can support training providers in their efforts to publish to the Credential Registry.

- **Partner with Credential Engine.** Over a dozen states have officially partnered with Credential Engine to increase transparency. Join this growing network.

Employers, business associations, and vendors to the business community

- **Publish information on industry credentials.** If you are an association, corporation, or other organization that offers credentials, publish your data to the Credential Registry and use CTDL. Credential Engine's tools and resources offer numerous benefits to the business community and it's easy to get started.

- **Use open data to strengthen your business.** If you are an HRIS vendor, integrate the Credential Registry into your tools and services. Use Credential Registry data to strengthen your hiring processes through a better understanding your prospective employees' credentials. Applications are already in development and it's easy to get started.

Open data application developers

- **Integrate open data into existing and new tools.** Integrate open data into new tools that help transform the education and talent marketplace. Whether the application targets individual users, like students or guidance counselors, or organizations, like research firms and employers, credential data can be leveraged to help solve real-world problems. Applications are already in development and it's easy to get started.

Quality assurance agencies (organizations that serve as accrediting or standardization bodies for credentials)

- **Contribute to transparency.** Publish data about your standards to the Credential Registry.

- **Utilize data from the Credential Registry.** Use the data in the Credential Registry to share updates to standards with credential providers in real time and help parents and students understand why your standards matter. Utilize the Credential Registry to better understand and compare new credentials.

Consumers and the general public

- **Advocate for transparency.** Help build a better education and workforce ecosystem through credential transparency. Continue to learn about and share why credential transparency has value for students and consumers. Encourage policymakers to implement practices and policies that expand adoption of the CTDL, participation in the Credential Registry, and the creation of applications for individual or institutional users.

- **Talk to decision-makers.** Reach out to credential providers, businesses, and standards agencies about why their organization should publish to the Credential Registry and utilize CTDL.

To learn more, visit us at www.credentialengine.org.