Credential Engine, Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, and Colorado Bring Greater Transparency to Secondary School Credentials

Credential Engine — with support from the Walton Family Foundation and others — will work with four states to map secondary school credentials to better understand paths available from education to careers, and build better data infrastructures other states can leverage to better support learners and workers.

March 3, 2022 (Washington D.C.) — As part of various grant-funded initiatives – including a grant from the Walton Family Foundation – national nonprofit Credential Engine will be working to bring credential transparency to the secondary school level. Credential Engine will work with Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, and Colorado to explore ways to publish their secondary school credentials in the Credential Registry and use these data to expand pathways and accountability across their states.

These four states are already deeply engaged in credential transparency. This grant will allow Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, and Colorado to expand on the innovative credential work they are already doing by ensuring that essential information about secondary school credentials (including their associated skills and competencies) is described in a common language and made public, easily accessible, and actionable.

"This work is a great opportunity to ensure that K-12 credential information – like high school diplomas, GEDs, career certifications, specialized diplomas, and so on – is made transparent using linked open data. People should be able to easily know what their options are – meaning not just be aware that these credentials exist but also what pathways and outcomes they lead to – and our work will make that possible," says Scott Cheney, CEO of Credential Engine.

Ohio's initial focus as a part of this work will be on credentials in cybersecurity. Through the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) – the standard common language to describe credentials and their associated skills/competencies – and the Credential Registry, Ohio will work to explore ways to publish secondary school credentials as a means to improve people's ability to see and navigate clear pathways to credentials in cybersecurity across the state. Better alignment between these credentials, secondary education, and workforce demands can help Ohio prepare and support its residents for in-demand jobs; starting with cybersecurity and then using that framework and data infrastructure to expand to other career fields.

"Cybersecurity is a growing area of need as companies' digital presence grows – and one that recent events have continued to show will be important for years to come. But it is currently difficult to show where people can find credentials and related skills that jobs in cybersecurity require. What are the paths? We are working with Credential Engine to bring better clarity to it all," Cheryl Rice, Vice Chancellor of Higher Education Workforce Alignment, Ohio Department of Higher Education.

The CTDL and Registry have provided Alabama the infrastructure to create their own statewide Alabama Credential Registry. This will enable employers and education and training providers to publish all the certificates, licenses, traditional degrees, and non-degree credentials offered in the

state. Alabama will now map the secondary credentials offered in their state to help high school students make better connections to jobs, career and technical education, continuing education, and so on. It will also help state leaders and policymakers determine where secondary credentials lie in the broader system of credentials and pathways across the state.

"Credential quality and transparency are vital for developing competency-based career pathways that lead to in-demand occupations for all Alabamians. The work to make all of our secondary credentials transparent is a natural extension of our partnership with Credential Engine to ensure that Alabama students, employees and employers alike have resources at their fingertips as they navigate the workforce. I am grateful our work here in Alabama will be bolstered by these funds made available by the Walton Family Foundation." – Kay Ivey, Governor of Alabama.

Indiana will focus on mapping and understanding credential pathways. Through this work, Indiana will help determine which data elements are required to build rich pathways in linked open data. This will help policymakers, state leaders, educators, credential providers, and employers to better understand how secondary school credentials are linked to other education and training opportunities and where possible gaps lie. The state's first step in this work will be the completion of ongoing work to map the Indiana College Core to the CTDL and publish it to the Credential Registry.

"As we work to expand robust pathways options for all students, this partnership will provide a clearer picture to all Hoosiers on how the knowledge and skills required for different credentials are linked," said John Keller, Chief Technology Officer for the Indiana Department of Education. "With this data presented in a transparent and user-friendly manner, we hope to empower more students to begin earning these credentials while they complete high school, giving them a head-start on a lifetime of success."

Finally, Colorado is focused on developing a better framework for K-12 credentials and pathways, improving credit mobility, and enhancing overall accountability. The goal is to enhance learning pathways and outcomes across Colorado through open data on credentials, skills, and competencies. Ultimately, the goal is for a holistic approach that also connects secondary school credential data to the community college system, four-year institutions, the workforce, and more.

The work of these four states may seem localized, but through credential transparency there are linkages that can expand across state lines helping to connect Americans to education and job opportunities across the country. The work of Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, and Colorado will help other states learn how to map their credentials, support this work themselves, and use credential data for decision-making.

If you have questions about the work unfolding across our state partners or want to learn more about Credential Engine and get involved, then please contact Jennifer Briones, Project Manager for Credential Engine, at jbriones@credentialengine.org.

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About Credential Engine:
Credential Engine is a non-profit whose mission is to map the credential landscape with clear and consistent information, fueling the creation of resources that empower people to find the pathways that are best for them. Our work is already underway in 27 states and regions, and across 2 regional consortia of states. Learn more at www.credentialengine.org.