

High Value Credentials for New England

Bringing
Transparency
and
Credential Literacy
to the Marketplace



Project Overview

A comprehensive, cloud-based registry that houses, organizes, and connects credential information from four targeted industry sectors –life-/biosciences, health, IT, and business & finance – published by higher education institutions and other credential providers in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The registry uses the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) to provide standardized terminology to describe credentials and can be used to build customized apps. Unlike the credential descriptions currently made available by individual institutions, the registry will provide students/workers, employers, educators, and policy leaders with transparent, standardized, easy-to-read information about the meaning and value of various credentials and discern viable educational and career pathways associated with specific credentials and/or industries.

New England's Imperative: Creating Credential Pathways

New England faces a fast-changing economy, economic inequalities, and unparalleled demographic challenges. Access to and completion of an affordable postsecondary credential of value is the key to our region's ability to adapt to changing workforce needs, attract and retain workers, and provide pathways to growth-oriented, high-wage jobs. However, the proliferation of multiple types and sources of credentials, as well as questions around the value of credentials, is creating a complex environment for individuals, institutions, and employers to navigate.



Credential Transparency Front and Center

In May 2018, Lumina Foundation awarded the New England Board of Higher Education a grant to launch High Value Credentials for New England (HVCNE) in partnership with Credential Engine. HVCNE will provide individuals, institutions, state policy leaders and employers the tools to:

- Develop a common language to describe credentials
- Evaluate the value of credentials
- Identify critical education and employment pipelines
- Understand the skills and competencies obtained by earning a credential

HVCNE will target the life-/bioscience, health, IT, and business & finance fields. Higher education institutions and other credential providers in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island will publish credentials awarded in these areas to the

Credential Registry -- a cloud-based library that houses, organizes, and connects credential information. The Credential Registry uses the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL), which provides a common set of terms to describe credentials and machines with a readable language that can be used to build customized apps.

Bringing Innovation to the Region's Credential Marketplace

HVCNE and the Credential Registry will provide infrastructure enabling individuals, states, institutions, and employers to look at credentials in new ways. Examples of how the Registry may be used to spur innovative practices in New England include:

Students / Workers -- By publishing life-/bioscience, health, IT, and business & finance credentials in New England to the Registry, prospective students can better search for and understand their education and training options within each New England state and across the region and the competencies acquired through these credentials, helping them make more informed decisions.

Career Exploration -- In the future, the Registry can be connected to career exploration tools used by students, academic advisors and career counselors to identify career pathways and relevant credentials.

Employers -- Assessing credentials and their competencies via the Registry, employers can expand their view of credentials to a wider range of providers and make more informed hiring decisions.

Educators -- By reviewing credential offerings within an institution and across systems at secondary and postsecondary education and training levels, institution leaders can make more informed choices about course offerings, competencies and delivery models.

States -- Registry data can inform public policy decisions around workforce development, career pathways, and strategies to meet attainment goals.

Challenges Posed by the Credential Marketplace in New England

Understanding the **meaning** and **value** of the various credentials offered is especially challenging due to:

- **Redundancies**⁺ across state lines.
- **Limited visibility** of some programs both within and outside institutions.
- Slight differences in program title listings with **little clarity** about what differentiates these similarly-named credentials.

An initial analysis of the credential marketplace, **has revealed at least 679 separate credential groups*** offered across all of the region's public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions within the

679

estimated number of different credential groups* offered by public postsecondary institutions in New England within targeted sectors

four targeted industry sectors: **life-/bioscience, health, IT, and business & finance.**

Through the High Value Credentials for New England (HVCNE) project, NEBHE aims to get a better look at **"what's under the hood."** HVCNE will bring **transparency** to the credential marketplace in New England and **create a network of peers** to strengthen the relationship between higher education and employers.

**Credentials were separated by program title and were not disaggregated by level (i.e., certificate, degree, etc.)*

+Some redundancy is reasonable due to demand and/or geography.

What's In a Credential?

In the credential marketplace, there exist numerous similarly named credential programs and types, with limited information about how they differ – particularly in terms of cost, duration, and viable career pathways post-graduation. At present, it is difficult to determine what the different credential types in each area of study truly mean. The selection below highlights some of these cases. Do you know the differences in substance and value among the following?

- **Biomedical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering & Biotechnology, Biotechnology, Biomedical Equipment Technology**
 - Types of credentials offered: **Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D.**
- **Applied Data Analytics, Analytics & Data Science, Applied Statistics, Analytical Economics**
 - Types of credentials offered: **Graduate Certificate, Certificate, Bachelor's**
- **Health Care Management, Health Management, Health Management & Policy, Health Policy & Management**
 - Types of credentials offered: **Certificate, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D.**