



What are the Critical Equity Data Points?

Through robust discussions, input in open meetings, and guidance from technical experts, Credential Engine’s Equity Advisory Council is recommending that a set of critical data points be published as linked, open, interoperable data in order to advance understanding and action about equitable pathways, transfer and recognition of learning. These data help to indicate if pathways are achieving robust outcomes for a racially and economically diverse community of learners. As these data points are used, it is essential to disaggregate all metrics by key characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, income, etc. to concretely understand what populations are or are not faring well — this includes disaggregating by any characteristics that might be specific to the population a provider serves.

The EAC identified and considered a wide range of data points and has prioritized a number of them into three principal tiers for action by credential, competency, and pathway providers and governance bodies, including workforce development and training providers, educational institutions, education and training systems, state agencies and commissions, state legislatures and governors, federal agencies and the Administration, and Congress. And while the EAC has opted to prioritize the data elements in these three tiers in the recognition of providers’ ability to make transparent such data, and the field’s ability to appropriately define, capture and manage such data, the EAC supports all developments to ensure that all identified data be made available to learners, workers, employers, educators, and policymakers as open, transparent data.

TIER 1

No Excuses. These are data points that all providers should be able to analyze and publish now.

Data points in Tier 1 create a strong foundation and should be standard reporting practices for all users and providers. They reflect that equitable pathways are not simply defined by access but must also encompass student centered supports that lead to persistence, retention, and completion. These data build a strong foundation and will aid in adopting an equity minded culture to better serve students.

Data Category Description	Specific Data Points
Cost Considerations	Cost of tuition / program
	Full cost of attendance / completion
Financial Assistance Consideration	Students in program are eligible for federal or state financial assistance
	Students in program are eligible for institutional or other financial assistance
Advisory Supports	Academic advising offered/required at key milestones
	Early career assessments that guide program choice and course registration
Completion Information	Credits to completion
	Time to completion
Transfer Pathways	Program transfer pathways are illustrated in a student- and advisor-facing map
Outputs	Enrollment rates
	Persistence rates
	Completion rates
	Pass rate for licensure or credentialing exams
Earnings Information	Earnings at 6, 12, 36 and 60 months following completion (as appropriate)
Placement Information	Placement rates at 6, 12, 36 months following completion (as appropriate)

Time to Stretch. These are data points that all providers should be actively working on being able to analyze and publish.

Once a firm baseline and consistent data practices are established, Tier 2 data points help entities to grow in needed areas to better assess if pathways are leading to equitable outcomes. Providers and users may not be prepared to capture or utilize each of this tier's data points, but given current developments in the field, providers should be making a concerted effort to move towards Tier 2 becoming standard practice.

Data Category Description	Specific Data Points
Secure, Digital Student Records	Provider supports students and learners developing consumable digital records and resumes
Credential Transparency	Provider uses standardized language around assessing skills and competencies (e.g., aligning offerings to hireable competencies), in addition to credentialing
Support Services	Appropriate and relevant wrap around support services, based in data about student needs, are readily available
	Program courses are offered at times that accommodate students managing work and life responsibilities
Program Design	Program offered in multiple modalities to accommodate different learning styles (e.g., online, in person)
Quality Assurance	Accreditation status
	Name of accrediting body
Stackable Credentials	Stackable credentials illustrated in a student- and advisor-facing program map
Completion Information	Number of transfer / prior learning credits the program will apply to completion
Credential Acquisition	Acquisition of related industry recognized credential (certification, license, etc.)
Financial Return on Investment	Debt of graduates analyzed alongside wages
Placement Information	Average length of time to initial job placement

Future Forward. These are data points that point to where the field is headed, and providers should be assessing how to build capacity to analyze and publish them.

As entities and the field grow in their data practices, there is a need to be responsive to the changing needs of learners and innovations that support their success. Tier 3 represents considerations that should be top of mind in coming years. In creating equitable pathways, there must be a consistent assessment of what is working well and what is relevant. As the needs of students change, these data points may also shift but this tier represents the need to be forward thinking and constantly assess what equitable outcomes require.

Data Category Description	Specific Data Points
Advisory Supports	Advisor to student ratio
Financial Assistance Consideration	Aid packaging and disbursements are designed to maximize value for the recipients
Support Services	Tutoring offered to support learners in program
Transfer and Credit Mobility	Number of transfer credits that were accepted and applied by a subsequent provider Provider has a student-facing tool with real time, personalized information for students on credit mobility and transfer that allows students to run "what if" scenarios to understand how to maximize credit applicability Existence of institutional policy on reverse transfer
Output: Job readiness and career outcomes	How many (and which) careers is the credential applicable to (i.e., can the learner apply to just one area?)
Placement Information	Job placement in desired field
Financial Return on Investment	Provider is creating social mobility over time for its graduates Learner receives wage increase based on credential

The EAC recognizes that this is an evolving and emerging field, and that these data points and tiers will also evolve and adjust over time. The above data recommendations are also not assumed to be fully comprehensive, and therefore Credential Engine will convene equity experts to review these recommendations periodically to ensure that they are accurate, relevant, and attainable.

The EAC does believe, however, that making these data elements transparent through linked, open data is essential to helping students, workers, educators and others improve equitable access and outcomes.

Centering Equity in the Use of Open Credential Data

To ensure that equity is fully considered and approached as both an essential input to transparency of credential and skills data, as well as a critical element of a new generation of better tools and services built around the benefits of linked, open data, there must be equal focus on both transparency and use. This implicates not only the owners and providers of credentials and competencies, but also commitment from companies, states and other entities that play a role in putting data into the hands of people to best equip them to make their most informed decisions with the goal of helping them reach equitable outcomes.

The first set of recommendations from the Equity Advisory Council focuses on identifying what data elements should be made transparent in support of advancing equity. And our call to action of the owners and providers of credentials and skills is to have them make those data elements open, linkable, and interoperable through the use of the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL). But realizing that transparency only gets us half the way to our goal. Truly

equitable data practices should create transparency for the most important users - students, workers and job-seekers. Without understanding all the nuances of inputs and outputs, students should be able to easily digest relevant information to aid them in selecting credential pathways best poised to support their desired goals and success.

As data practices become intentionally anchored in equity, there must be a willingness to hold entities accountable to make adjustments if data trends show consistent shortcomings and unintended consequences. Equitable data practices cannot be maintained without clear guiding principles and the identification of critical data points. Such principles allow for appropriate and effective use of these data to support students' discovery and successful navigation of pathways and transfer to achieve optimal and equitable outcomes.

Therefore we are calling on the developers of tools, services, platforms and resources that deliver exploration, guidance, counseling, or navigation of educational or occupational credentials and skills in any way to examine their fundamental approaches to the use

of all data, including but not limited to those data elements identified above. We also call upon them to leverage the fundamental and intentional benefits of linked, open, interoperable data in order to address and advance equity.

Finally, those entities purchasing and using such tools, services, platforms and resources, such as schools, education systems and districts, city, county and state agencies, colleges and universities, workforce boards, and community-based organizations, should include the following principles as requirements or considerations in their procurement, evaluation, and reevaluation processes.

Through its work, the EAC identified the following key principles. The EAC is mindful that this list of principles is not all encompassing. Based on organizational context and who is being served, additional principles may be needed to ensure an equitable approach.

1

An intentional focus on equity is required to create an environment that **improves outcomes for all learners**

- **USE** data to confirm or indicate that improvements are occurring and creating the intended outcomes.
- **COMMIT** to long-term equitable data use and consistently review and assess data equity practices to ensure they reflect a commitment to equity and a keen understanding of how to apply an equity lens.
- **MANAGE** workflows in ways that consistently elevate attention to equity in data use and ensure ongoing intentionality about how to use data to mitigate inequities.

2

Disaggregation of data is essential to understand outcomes for both key populations (e.g., adults, local/regional residents) and all learners served

- **ENSURE** that appropriately disaggregated data are publicly available (in ways that protect student privacy) so that learners, workers and job-seekers can see information that is relevant to their individual experiences (e.g. credentials, skills, programs, or pathways that are relevant for certain populations such as adults and student parents; the specific earnings and employment outcomes of credentials, programs, or pathways for different specific populations, such as black women in a particular region; credentials, programs, or pathways that align to particular employment requirements).
- **ELEVATE** a clear emphasis on racial equity. Finely disaggregate data, name specific populations of focus, and avoid using proxies (e.g., low-income) that do not reveal disparate outcomes even when learners have similar types of experiences.
- **ESTABLISH** baselines around racial equity outcomes and transparently chart growth over time.
- **PROVIDE** contextual data that allows users to understand if providers are serving their target populations well. For example, when providing information on racial outcomes via disaggregated data, consider including the context regarding what is possible.

3

Credentials must be **relevant and valuable** for learners

- **ENSURE** that data make clear and transparent:
 - The range of credentials and pathways available to learners (e.g., certificates, apprenticeships, certifications, licenses, two- and four-year degree programs, and the various combinations of those that constitute high quality and effective pathways), including ensuring local/regional availability for learners.
 - The full value of credentials (e.g., labor market value, interest alignment, range of occupations to which the credential can lead, stackability and transfer options, etc.).
- **FOCUS** on credentials of value, including connecting credentials to common career pathways that are locally/regionally available.
 - Ensure that users accessing the data are able to view and understand all the performance measures and indicators of value available, relevant, valid, and used.

4

Clear user **design practices**¹ must be identified and followed

- **LISTEN** to learners and other data users to understand what they want and need from data and consistently respond to feedback.
- **AVOID** jargon, use clear and concise language, and use standardized language (when possible/appropriate).
- **ENSURE** tools are designed to be accessible and inclusive.
- **INCORPORATE** advanced technology into tools to assure the tools are learning and adapting to user identity (e.g., an equity audit algorithm).

¹ See the Universal Design for Learning Framework, Accessed April 5, 2023, <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

5

Guidance and/or professional development is required for professionals interacting with, presenting and/or using the data for an intentional culture and commitment to equitable approaches

- **APPROACH** equitable data use and analysis practices with a positive view of learners and the assets they bring (e.g. use data terms such as “high-priority” as opposed to “high-risk”).
- **ENSURE** that counselors/advisers are able to explain a range of critical information to learners (e.g., how salary increases interact with benefits cliff; any prerequisites/ foundational skills needed).
- **PROVIDE** ongoing anti-bias and asset-based professional development, and embed guidance and professional development into daily activities, for those interacting with the data and in particular for those who counsel student populations.

6

Leverage the value of CTDL and **linked, open data** to help counselors, students, workers and others search for, discover, explore, understand, build and navigate pathways that lead to equitable outcomes

- **COMMIT** to the integration and use of data using linked, open, interoperable formats in student, worker and employer-facing tools, services and platforms.
- **ENSURE** that such use of linked, open data maximizes the ability of students and workers themselves to search, discover, understand and navigate providers, programs, credentials, skills, and pathways for themselves.
- **UTILIZE** the inherent connectivity of linked, open data to allow for the expansive customization of equitable pathways consisting of high quality credentials and skills from a wide variety of sources to give students and workers a wide range of options to meet their goals, given life circumstances.

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These one-pagers are part of a larger report created by Credential Engine’s Equity Advisory Council.
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