Open Data for Meaningful, Valuable Learning and Employment Records

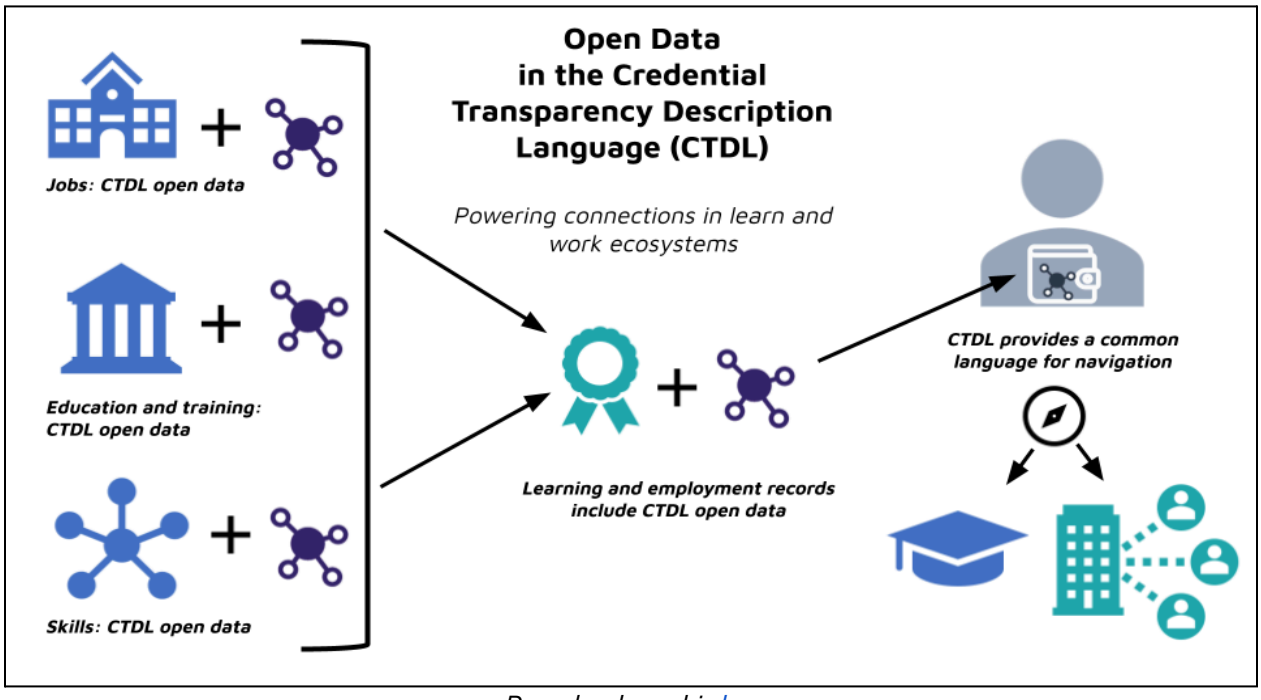
Across a lifetime of learning and employment, a person's achievements are represented in many different types of credentials and skills, from many different providers. Unfortunately, most of our systems for creating and managing records of learning and work are siloed and disconnected. Credentials from schools, colleges, jobs, military, on-the-job training, and many other sources are issued and stored in different ways, using different data structures and different types of control. This is not merely inconvenient. These disconnects can

- create barriers to academic and career progress;
- delay critical support and services;
- systematically exclude people who don't have the resources to obtain credential records; and
- impede economic advancement, both for individuals and for communities.

To address these problems, digital Learning and Employment Records (LERs) provide interoperable, portable credentials that document people's skills, educational experiences, and work histories. LERs document learning and experience wherever they occur, including in the workplace, through education and training, community activities, or military contexts. The basic concept is that a person collects their own records of employment, education, training, and skills in a digital wallet they control, empowering secure and verifiable exchanges of these records across many different learn and work systems and processes. With open standard LERs,

- people can share their own achievements and match them with opportunities and jobs;
- employers can identify and recruit talent more efficiently and effectively; and
- education and training providers can clearly communicate the value of their offerings.

LERs & the Credential Transparency Description Language



Download graphic here.

LERs are more effective at helping people find opportunities when these records include clear and relevant open data. The digital credentials issued to a person can contain within them only a limited amount of information. However, the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) enables credential providers to communicate much richer information than they would otherwise be able to. CTDL contextualizes LERs by linking to a global body of connected data.. This makes LERs that include CTDL more meaningful (including information about the skills and learning they represent), interoperable (across different types of systems and processes), and actionable, so that people and systems can do useful things with them.

When LERs include CTDL, learners, workers, educators, and employers are empowered with the context they need to make informed decisions along learning and career pathways.

How this works:

1. organizations publish credential, skill, and job data in CTDL to the Credential Registry;
2. digital credentials that are issued to people link to the data in the Registry; so that
3. when people and systems, including AI systems, read these digital credentials, they can understand what they mean by using data from the Registry.

*The Credential Registry **does not** collect or track information about individuals or the credentials that have been issued to them. Credentials issued to an individual in an LER include links to related data in the Registry, providing transparency about what a person's credentials mean and how they are valuable.*

The Role of States in Building LER Ecosystems

LERs should be part of broader state investments in information systems and data transparency. State leaders can make LERs part of their education and workforce strategies and require that LERs include CTDL data about credentials, skills, and jobs. By building a culture that encourages state government, employers, and education and training providers to work in a coordinated and aligned fashion, states will improve their learning and career ecosystems, including LERs that unlock opportunities for economic prosperity.

The Federal Role in Building LER Ecosystems

Credential Engine identifies at least four areas in which the federal government must play a role:
First, ensure that digital credentials, skills and LERs reach everyone.
Second, require the use of open and interoperable data standards across the full credential and skills ecosystem. In fact, no federal funding should be used for LERs that do not meet standards for open and interoperable data.
Third, extend existing data privacy and security laws and protections to cover LERs as well.
Fourth, provide support to improve validation of skills attainment so it's more efficient, accurate, and scalable.

See Credential Engine's Learning and Employment Records Action Guide for more in-depth information, in order to connect the why and how to for LERs that meet the needs of your stakeholders.