

Trellis Strategies Selected to Lead Research for Standardized Credential Information Label

Credential Engine, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and the Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) at Rutgers University are pleased to announce the selection of Trellis Strategies (Trellis) as its research partner to support the development of a standardized credential information label. The selection follows a competitive [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) process seeking an organization to conduct the stakeholder research that will shape the structure, content, and design of the label to provide essential, consistent information about credentials and facilitate better decision-making for and communication among learners, employers, educators, policymakers, and others.

"As the credential landscape grows, so does the need for consistent, accessible ways to understand what credentials offer. Just like a nutrition label breaks down what's in your food, this label will give people a consistent way to understand what a credential offers. Our main goal is to bring that same clarity and standardization to a space that's long needed it," said Scott Cheney, Chief Executive Officer at Credential Engine.

Credential information is often inconsistent, fragmented, and difficult to interpret, creating barriers for the very people who depend on it most. A standardized credential information label has the potential to change that. A common framework for how credential information is presented and understood can equip learners with the clarity to make informed decisions about their education and career paths, give employers a more reliable basis for evaluating candidates, and help educators and policymakers better align programs with workforce needs.

"Capturing data that are helpful to guide choices about credentials is only half the challenge," noted Michelle Van Noy, Director of the Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University. *"Finding ways to effectively communicate that information is an essential component for making better sense of the complex credential marketplace. Establishing some common language to describe credentials is one way to help advance this goal."*

"Empowering learners begins with understanding the specific and essential information needed to make choices about a credential. Inconsistent or fragmented information across the education and employment sectors creates unnecessary

barriers to opportunity and erodes public trust,” stated Melanie Gottlieb, Executive Director of AACRAO. *“By establishing a common framework, we ensure the transparent alignment of information, equipping every learner with the clarity required for informed decision-making about their future.”*

Trellis Strategies will lead focus group research with diverse stakeholder groups to understand what information about credentials matters most and how it should be presented. Their findings will directly inform the design principles of the credential information label, ensuring the final product is meaningful and useful.

“As learners increasingly navigate education and training through non-linear pathways, we recognize the critical role that clear, meaningful credential information plays in supporting informed decisions. By centering field and stakeholder voices, this work will inform more human-centered credential information that better reflects how learners explore opportunities and plan their education and career journeys,” said Bryan Ashton, Managing Director at Trellis Strategies.

Our partnership invites learners, employers, educators, policymakers, researchers, and other constituents to share their perspectives as this work advances. A [feedback form](#) is available below to capture community input on what information matters most and how the credential information label can best serve your needs.

[\[Feedback Form\]](#)

Those interested in the origins of this initiative are encouraged to explore [A Nutrition Label for Credentials](#), which outlines the foundational concept behind this work.

For more information, visit credentialengine.org or contact us at info@credentialengine.org.

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About AACRAO: AACRAO is a non-profit, voluntary, professional association working to make higher education more responsive to learners. With a membership of more than 18,000 higher education professionals at approximately 2,300 institutions in more than 40 countries, collectively representing over 16.5 million enrolled learners, the association provides advocacy, research, and policy-based guidance and training to higher education professionals to smooth the path for learners at every stage of their journey.

About Credential Engine: Credential Engine is a non-profit whose mission is to map the credentials, qualifications, and skills landscape with clear information, fueling the

creation of resources that empower people to discover and pursue the learning and career pathways that are best for them. Credential Engine provides a suite of web-based services that creates for the first time a centralized Credential Registry to house up-to-date information about all credentials, the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) a common description language to enable credential comparability, and a platform to support customized applications to search and retrieve information about credentials.

About EERC: Rutgers' Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) is a nonprofit research organization housed within the School of Management and Labor Relations. EERC conducts research and evaluation on programs and policies at the intersection of education and employment. Our work strives to improve policy and practice so that institutions may provide educational programs and pathways that ensure individuals obtain the education needed for success in the workplace, and employers have a skilled workforce to meet their human resource needs. For more information on our mission and current research, visit smlr.rutgers.edu.

About Trellis Strategies: Trellis Strategies is a leading nonprofit research and technical assistance firm dedicated to advancing postsecondary education and strengthening the workforce. Leveraging more than four decades of experience supporting higher education institutions and the students they serve, our team helps organizations translate data into action for modern learners, many of whom are navigating increasingly non-linear postsecondary pathways and balancing multiple roles beyond a primary student identity. For more information, visit www.trellisstrategies.org/about-us/