Stackable Credentials: Building Market Value on the Path to a Degree
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Build capacity of colleges to improve CTE credential attainment rates by offering stackable credentials, a series of incremental milestones, on the path to degree completion.
Characteristics of Stackable Credentials

- Developed through active employer engagement
- Responsive to labor market/talent development needs of region
- Link educational certificates to industry certifications
- Support diverse groups of learners
- Provide multiple entry and exit points
- Support earn-and-learn models through flexible scheduling
- Provide credentials with labor market value on the path to a degree
A **CAREER PATHWAY** is a combination of rigorous, high-quality education, training, and other services.

Attributes:
- Industry alignment
- Secondary and postsecondary credential attainment
- Enables entry and advancement in specific occupations or occupational clusters
- Education in the same context as workforce preparation
- Acceleration of educational and career advancement
- Preparation for success in secondary/postsecondary education options and apprenticeships
- Counseling services

A **PROGRAM OF STUDY (POS)** is a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level.

Attributes:
- Industry alignment
- Postsecondary credential
- Multiple entry/exit points
- Academic, technical, employability skills
- Challenging standards
- Progressive content specificity
- Career guidance

**STACKABLE CREDENTIALS**

At these milestones the learner may advance to the next-higher-skill job in the sector for which they have trained, and/or continue in or reenter the learning pathway to pursue additional credentials.

*These stackable credentials may:
- Include preparation for industry certifications.
- Articulate to bachelor’s degree programs.
- Be obtainable by HS students through dual credit.

**CAREER EXPLORATION**

Begins no later than 8th grade and is an integral part of instruction for:
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Integrated Education and Training (IET)
- Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- Adult Secondary Education (ASE)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

*Programs of Study and Career Pathways share many of the same attributes. The two terms are used interchangeably in many state and local applications. Both are defined in Federal Law.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Assistance Delivery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ May 2020 – August 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>🏫 Customized TA for cohort of 10 teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>🗓️ Coaching, goal setting, and action planning tailored to local/regional needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>📈 Advance efforts in embedding stackable credentials and industry certifications in associate degree programs</td>
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<td>💼 Supported by experienced TA coaches from:</td>
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Pathways to Credentials TA

*Providing targeted assistance to address local needs*

- Guided by action plan
- Supported by coaches and SMEs
- Aided by curated resources and tutorials
- Enhanced by cohort interaction
- Broadened through professional development
Pathways to Credentials TA Cohort

- Community College of Aurora/Colorado Northwestern CC (Colorado)
- University of District of Columbia Community College (DC)
- Lake-Sumter State College (Florida)
- Leeward Community College (Hawaii)
- Malcolm X College (Illinois)
- Southern University - Shreveport (Louisiana)
- Ocean County College (New Jersey)
- Onondaga Community College (New York)
- Community College of Allegheny County (Pennsylvania)
- North Central Texas College (Texas)
Key Areas of Focus

1. Strengthening Employer Engagement
2. Designing Career Pathways with Stackable Credentials
3. Supporting Completion
   Including Facilitating Non-credit to Credit Integration and Credit for Prior Learning
4. Sustaining Stackable Credentials
Technical Assistance Components

- Virtual Orientation and 2-Day Institute
- Monthly meetings with TA coach
- Local action plan and timeline
- Bi-monthly meetings with sector cohort
- Curated resources/networking in Community of Practice
- Webinars on promising practices
- Targeted assistance from SMEs
- Document lessons learned
Industry Sectors Represented

**Manufacturing:**
- Leeward CC
- North Central Texas College
- Community College of Allegheny College

**Healthcare:**
- Malcolm X College
- Onondaga CC
- Lake Sumter State College
- Ocean County College

**Information Technology:**
- CC of Aurora and Colorado Northwestern CC
- University of District of Columbia CC
- Southern University
Example Activities

*Focus on community needs*

- Creating a new sequence of certificates that stack to an associate degree
- Aligning program exit points with industry certifications
- Instituting new policies or practices that facilitate credit for prior learning and non-credit/credit integration
- Engaging employers to validate program competencies and identify credentials of value
Strengthening Employer Engagement

Key Area 1
Reinventing Advisory Committees Through BILT

- Past model: faculty-led industry advisory committee
- New model: Business & Industry Leadership Team (BILT)
- Engage local industry to drive curriculum improvement, recruitment, and community engagement.
- Industry-led team includes chair and committees—critical to team’s success and effectiveness
- New BILT collaborated to develop:
  - mission and vision
  - strategic plan/communications plan
  - annual focus area
Business Industry Leadership Team (BILT)

- Approach to curriculum development
- Co-leadership between education and industry
- Allows for discussion and voting on knowledge, skills and abilities required by local businesses
- Includes forecasting of future trends and programmatic decisions related to trends
- Industry serves as subject matter experts on current and future skill requirements
- Continuous feedback loop from educators to industry
Designing Career Pathways with Stackable Credentials

Key Area 2
Collaboration Key for Small Programs

- Horticulture changing—environmental constraints, new technologies, customer preferences, labor market trends
- Not easy for small programs to keep up on their own
- Partnered with peer colleges, industry association, and statewide faculty association in agriculture
- Sustainable Landscape and Landscape Arborist certificates and curriculum; embeds industry-recognized credentials leading to certification
- Approved as statewide model curriculum
## Career Pathways

**Health Service Management Associate in Science**

### Prior Credit
- **High School Career Pathways Certificate**
  - Administrative Office Specialist
  - Allied Health Assisting
  - Applied Cybersecurity
  - Applied Information Technology
  - Business Management & Analysis
  - Digital Design
  - International Business
  - Legal Administrative Specialist
  - Nursing Assistant
  - Web Development

### Prior Credit Technical College Certificate
- Accounting Operations
- Administrative Office Specialist
- Medical Assisting
- Practical Nursing

### Industry Certifications
- Certified Medical Administrative Assistant (CMAA)
- Registered Medical Assistant (RMA)

### College Credit Certificate
- Medical Information Coder/Biller (37 credit hours)
  - **Industry Certifications**
    - CCA; CCS; CCS-P; CPC
  - **Career**
    - Average Cost of Program: $4,100.00
    - Typical Starting Positions
      - Medical Secretary
      - Medical Receptionist
      - Insurance Clerk
      - Billing Clerk
    - Average Starting Salary: $15.67 hourly

### College Credit Certificate
- Medical Office Management (34 credit hours)
  - **Career**
    - Average Cost of Program: $3,750.00
    - Typical Starting Positions
      - Medical Secretary
      - Medical Receptionist
      - Insurance Clerk
      - Billing Clerk
    - Average Starting Salary: $15.67 hourly

### Associate Degree
- Health Services Management (60 credit hours)
  - **Industry Certifications**
    - CAHIMS, CHM
  - **Career**
    - Average Cost of Program: $6,600.00
    - Typical Starting Positions
      - Medical Office Manager
      - Health Services Department Supervisor
      - Billing Supervisor
      - Revenue Cycle Analyst
    - Average Starting Salary: $18.00 hourly

### Bachelor Degree
- Strategic Leadership (120 credit hours)
  - **Career**
    - Average Cost of Program: $7,200.00
    - Typical Starting Positions
      - Medical Practice Manager
      - Health Services Department Manager
      - Revenue Cycle Supervisor/Manager
      - Human Resource Specialist
      - Entrepreneur
    - Average Starting Salary: $25.66 hourly

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Learn more at www.LSSC.edu/academics
Supporting Completion

Key Area 3
Non-Credit/Credit Alignment

- Relationship building—Cross serving faculty and noncredit instructors
- Shared advisory boards
- Faculty champions—As they saw noncredit students become successful support grew
- Programs physically situated in same hallway
- Re-organization of institution—Dean of Employer Engagement/Community Education seat at academic table
- Awareness that rigor was there to award selected credits
- Presently 12-14 credits carry into Industrial Automation, Mechanical or Electrical Technology AAS degrees and 30 credits articulate into a Technical Associates
- Institutional buy-in and belief
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Expansion

PLA Workgroup Goals:

- Clarify/streamline internal processes, tools
- Ensure broad internal understanding, buy-in, role clarity
- Strengthen student messaging, encourage access
- Leverage state system capacity/tools where applicable
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Expansion

Initiatives:

- **Internal processes & tools:** developed new staff guidebook, new request & evaluation forms; expanded PLA matrix; confirmed Testing Center proctoring challenge exams

- **Role clarification:** chairs, testing, credentials evaluator

- **Staff communication:** chairs & AA leadership team, advisors & all SA staff, fiscal, college leadership team

- **Student messaging:** new website content, Tableau interface

- **Budget:** funds for new exam/portfolio creation
More Takeaways from Past Cohorts

- Stackable credentials are essential ingredients in a career pathways system
- Advocates and partners are vital
- Local context is key
- Cohort network extremely valuable
- Get out of experience what you put in
Pathways to Credentials

Stackable credentials focus career and technical education programs on building the critical skills needed for students to advance in growing sectors of the economy.

By awarding credit for a range of education, training, and workplace learning and skill building experiences that “stack” toward associate degrees, stackable credential programs help working students develop the skills they need to advance on the job and earn credentials that enable further study – at the same time. This accelerates credit attainment and may increase the likelihood of degree completion.
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Introduction to Stackable Credentials
Learn about stackable credentials and how they can support employer partners and students.

Pathways to Credentials Cohort
This initiative assists community and technical colleges in their efforts to embed stackable, industry-recognized credentials within technical associate degree programs.

Certification Crosswalk
Use this interactive tool to quickly find certifications for career and technical education.
(Under maintenance)
Tool Kit

Introduction to Stackable Credentials

Section Topics:
• Introduction
• Employer Engagement
• Designing Curriculum for Stackable Credentials
• Supporting Completion
• Sustaining Stackable Credentials
Resources

The Pathways to Credentials and Mapping Upward projects created tutorials and podcasts offering the perspectives of community college practitioners on issues relevant to stackable credentials.

Tutorials

Industry Credentials as a Basis for Articulation
Julie Parks, Grand Rapids Community College
January 2021
Shares how eight Michigan colleges collaborated to articulate pathways from noncredit to credit in manufacturing.
- Recording
- Presentation (PDF, 2.5 MB)

Developing a Business Industry Leadership Team to Enhance Employer Engagement
Ann Beheler, National Convergence Technology Center
January 2021
Discusses the essential elements of the Business & Leadership Team (BiLT) model of employer engagement.
- Recording
- Presentation (PDF, 1.5 MB)

Exploring Credit for Prior Learning
Expanding Credit for Prior Learning, with Jamie Spacial, Gateway Technical College
Summer 2017
Shares best practices related to the development of prior learning assessments and a sustainable credit for prior learning system.
- Presentation (PDF, 1 MB)
- Transcript (DOCX, 39 KB)
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Access Resources

Project website  
https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/credentials

Business & Industry Leadership Team (BILT) Model  
https://www.pathwaystoinnovation.org/bilt-academy-blog/

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