



## 2017-20 Los Angeles Basin WIOA Regional Plan ([link](#))

### D. Industry-Valued Credentials

As part of the regional planning process for the Los Angeles Basin, the consultants worked with stakeholders to identify where credentials are being offered, what types of credentials are awarded (e.g. degrees, certificates, licenses), what are the perceived value of the credentials by all parties (e.g. those awarding them, those receiving them and industry), and what role businesses have had in determining their value, either as they were being developed or afterward. As a resource and as a reference point for this process, the consultants utilized the California Workforce Development Board's Credentialing Framework.

Early on in the process of looking at credentials, it became clear that businesses, workers, schools, the workforce system and others had widely varying definitions of credentials and the role that industry should play in determining their value. While credentials have certainly been on everyone's radar for a long time, what has been missing appears to include:

- A common understanding of credentialing (the State Board's Framework document helps with that)
- When industry input should be obtained
- How industry should be engaged to review credentials
- In a region where there are nearly a quarter of a million businesses, what constitutes "industry value?" If five businesses agree that a machining certificate has value, does that mean a sixth one will?

It was, therefore, determined that credentials should be a primary topic of the planning forums held with stakeholders.

### I. Putting Credentials into Context

Four forums, hosted by the City of Los Angeles, Foothill, Los Angeles County and Verdugo WDBs were conducted to address the issues of what credentials exist and how industry has been engaged to determine their value.

### Initiating the Credential Discussion with Industry and Stakeholders

The stakeholder planning sessions on this topic had a good mix of participation from education, business, economic development, workforce and other stakeholders. The first part of the discussion split into two main areas: 1) what process is used to ensure industry value as courses are being developed; and 2) for courses already on the shelf, what processes exist for industry to review content so that it can determine the value of a credential for those who complete given courses or a program of study. Responses to these questions were varied. It is clear that the community colleges use a business advisory process to inform the development of curricula, as do other education agencies. But it was also clear that processes vary significantly from place to place and from course to course.

The second part of the discussion moved to the value that businesses place on specific credentials. From forum to forum, the responses were fairly consistent and indicated that:

- Credentials are essential for some jobs. In some cases, industry not only values and recognizes credentials, it absolutely requires them. Barbers must be licensed. Truck drivers must be licensed. RNs must have an Associate's Degree or higher and pass the State registry exam. In fact, business leaders and others identified many occupations (including many "professional" jobs) that require a specific degree, license or certification.
- Credentials are optional in many cases: For other jobs, many indicated that certificates may be required, but they were not universally valued due to inconsistency in performance among workers who held them. Stakeholders commented that inconsistent course content, instructor knowledge and other factors deflate the value of certificates for some businesses. Many agreed that a certificate does not universally equate to skills and competency and that many skilled and competent workers and job candidates do not have certificates.

## **More Intensive Industry-Led Planning on Post-Secondary Credentials**

The foregoing observations have made clear the need for the regional partners (particularly workforce, education and economic development) to implement a structured process for engagement with business on credentialing, which will also serve as a means to discuss key content issues for regional sector pathway programs. The local WDBs will convene an industry steering committee for each of the region's six target sectors to discuss work-related credentials. The committees will include a diverse cross section of businesses in terms of company size, location in the region and niche within the industry. Committees may meet on multiple occasions. The committees will:

- Review and recommend metrics for determining the value of credentials.
- Review existing credentials awarded in the region that pertain to their sector and determine their value
- Identify credentials that would be desirable for the industry
- Develop a process for re-confirming the value of credentials overtime
- Provide recommendations on course content for regional sector pathway programs and other training that will produce the credentials.
- Following completion of the foregoing task, the WDB Partnership will publish a regional protocol for determining industry value and recognized credentials.

Goals on credentialing are summarized in Section L of this Plan. Updates to the Regional Plan will include information on industry-valued credentials that result from this engagement process.

## **II. Existing Industry-Valued and Recognized Postsecondary Credentials and Maintaining their Relevance for Businesses in Key Sectors**

While it is likely that credentials resulting from the career pathway programs described in Section B of this plan have all been subject to industry review and are valued by business, no credential is being put forward as "industry-valued" at this time. This will occur once the industry review process described above is completed.

## **III. Determining the Value of Credentials to Industry**

As indicated, a clear and reasonably uniform process is needed to identify that postsecondary credentials are industry-valued and recognized. The protocol above will provide this framework.

## **IV. Principal Providers of Credentials within the Region**

Section B, Item IV of this Regional Plan provides a description of the principal providers of training and education programs throughout the Los Angeles Basin RPU. Given the focus of the Regional Plan on middle-skill jobs (and entry-level employment with a path to middle-skill jobs), the community colleges and adult schools will likely be the providers of training for most credentials. Again, this cannot be definitively stated until the industry engagement on valued credentials is completed.

## **V. Identifying, Recording and Tracking Credential Attainment within the Region**

Because the goal of producing the region's share of the State target of a million industry-recognized credentials over the next ten years applies to the entire system (community, colleges, adults schools, 4-year institutions, registered apprenticeships, Job Corps, etc.) and not just the WDBs, the stakeholders will form a workgroup to address the apportionment of goals among local areas and, within each area, the various partners. The WDB Partnership will convene system stakeholders in discussions around both goals for credentials and the development of a process to track their attainment.

Given the population of the region relative to the state as a whole, it is anticipated that the RPU would be responsible for 25 percent of the state goal or 250,000 credentials over the coming decade. As the regional stakeholders develop a plan to track credentials, discussion with the State will be necessary regarding annual goals, as it will likely take 2 to 3 years to be fully ramped up.