

# Florida Credentials Review Committee

## Florida Credential of Value Workgroup Report Executive Summary and Next Steps

Since its first meeting in September 2021, the Florida Credentials Review Committee has received briefings on work undertaken by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) prior to the passage of the 2021 Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act. FDOE contracted with Education Strategy Group (ESG) to conceptualize a definition for credentials of value and a corresponding methodology to determine which credentials meet this definition.

At the core of the work was the goal that Florida's education and workforce training systems have a clear sightline into which training programs lead Floridians to careers in high-value fields and the corresponding credentials that open doors to employment.

Leveraging ESG's credentialing expertise, FDOE convened a Credential of Value Workgroup of 24 workforce education leaders and senior representatives from the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO); CareerSource Florida; the Governor's REACH Office; local school districts and postsecondary institutions; the Florida Council of 100; and the Florida Chamber Foundation. Together, the workgroup focused on developing a conceptual Framework of Quality to assess "the worth" of credentials *below* the baccalaureate level including registered apprenticeships, industry certifications, licenses, college credit certificates, career certificates, applied technical diplomas, associate in applied science degrees, and associate in science degrees. Together this workgroup:

- Participated in virtual and in-person working sessions between May 2021 and January 2022;
- Contributed to recommendations for defining high-value credentials, a corresponding methodology for identifying credentials that meet wage and demand thresholds, and potential indicators of credential sequencing;
- Examined leading state practices from Alabama, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Washington to better understand key strategies and drivers at play;
- Considered how these indicators might be leveraged across education and workforce initiatives to increase the value and alignment of programs throughout the state; and
- Shared the development of this work with leaders within their respective organizations to capture and include their feedback through the process and generate support for a final framework.

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The *Florida Credential of Value Workgroup Report* serves as a launch pad for a stronger understanding of credentials of value in our state. The report offers lessons learned and suggestions on next steps, priorities and forward-looking questions for Florida. For example:

- 1) How can Florida leverage the work and expertise of other states to develop its own criteria for a Master Credentials List? What aspects of the work from other states are not feasible or applicable to Florida's work? (page 7)
- 2) At what point after credential attainment can learners be expected to earn a middle to high wage? Florida may want to consider a wage one year into employment to better reflect the immediate impact of the credential. (page 10)
- 3) Of the five credential sequencing criteria noted in the report, which are necessary for a credential to be considered stackable? Is further research necessary into Florida sequencing rates and patterns? (page 13)
- 4) How should Florida incorporate multiple Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code linkages to each postsecondary program of study or industry certification? (page 16)
- 5) How will employer validation of credentials of value be developed and coordinated going forward? Representation should include at a minimum: geographic representation, sample sizes of small, medium, and large employers, inclusion of trade associations and other employer voices, local workforce development boards and chambers of commerce. What sample size will be considered valid? (page 41)
- 6) What methodology will be used to determine demand for degree credentials? The REACH Act suggests a degree credential that meets the Labor Market Estimating Conference demand thresholds is a credential of value, without suggesting that the wages earned by those degree holders be taken into consideration. Also, if a non-degree credential does not meet middle-wage thresholds and sequences to an associate degree that meets demand but hasn't been evaluated for wage outcomes, can that fulfill the sequencing intention of the legislation? (page 42)
- 7) What opportunities exist for the Credentials Review Committee to explicitly connect the FDOE's Career and Technical Education Audit to the credentials of value work? (page 43)

In January 2022, the Florida Credentials Review Committee created four workgroups focused on the four key elements of a Framework of Quality (that is, wages, demand, credential sequencing and credential identification). Many of these

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priorities and considerations are already under discussion by each workgroup and its stakeholders and captured in each workgroup's charter.

The *Florida Credential of Value Workgroup Report* has been provided to each workgroup lead and the suggestions, priorities and forward-looking questions posed within the report have been added to each workgroup's agenda for further evaluation and consideration. The opportunity to incorporate the learnings from the Credential of Value Workgroup will be useful to the goal of bringing recommendations for a Framework of Quality to the full Credentials Review Committee in September. (See following page for April 28, 2022, Addendum)

## Addendum

The following are recommended next steps and considerations as shared with the Credentials Review Committee April 28, 2022, by Keith Richard, Ph.D., Statewide Director of Career and Technical Education Quality, Florida Department of Education.

- The conceptual Credentials of Value framework considered Associate of Science degrees and below.
- The Florida Credential of Value Workgroup Report and Executive Summary identified various challenges in this process:
  - For example, special considerations must be made when using Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data to measure the actual earnings among industry certification (IC) completers.
    - ICs are often embedded in a degree or certificate program and it is difficult to separate whether earnings are a result of the IC or the degree/certificate.
    - ICs may be earned while actively pursuing a degree or certificate, such as in the middle of a postsecondary program, or upon the completion of a degree or certificate, such as at the end of the postsecondary program. This makes it difficult to determine when to start tracking IC completers for employment and what timeline to use for tracking.
- Using a middle-high wage threshold derived from mean occupational wages may be limiting. Establishing a middle-high wage threshold based on a proxy

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for entry-level wages may better represent the intent of the Credentials Review Committee's work.

- The same middle-high wage threshold may not be appropriate to apply to all credential types. For example, it may not be appropriate to hold a career certificate completer to the same middle-high wage threshold as a Ph.D. completer.
- ESG's analyses and processes were conducted at the state level. Additional work is needed to assess credentials and occupations at regional and local levels.
- ESG's employer feedback survey model may be valuable to the Credentials Review Committee's validation for the Master Credentials List.