

WORKFORCE CREDENTIALS GLOSSARY of TERMS

Apprenticeship-Related Instruction (ARI): Course instruction that meets the classroom training requirements of registered apprenticeship programs. Depending on the program or education institution, ARI can also count as academic credit toward degrees or certificates.

Badges: Digital representations of individuals' achievements, consisting of an image and metadata uniquely linked to the individual's skills. Digital badges have an issuer (institution that testifies), an earner (learner), and a displayer (site that houses the badge).

Bridge Programs: Designed for individuals who require training or skill enhancement to meet minimum requirements for participation in degree or certificate programs. Bridge programs allow learners to start from their current skill levels and work toward enrollment in training programs they ultimately seek to complete.

Career and Technical Education (CTE): As defined in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. § 2302(5)), the term "career and technical education" means organized educational activities that (A) offer a sequence of courses that— (i) provides individuals with rigorous academic content and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions, which may include high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, which shall be, at the secondary level, aligned with the challenging State academic standards adopted by a State under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; (ii) provides technical skill proficiency or a recognized postsecondary credential, which may include an industry-recognized credential, a certificate, or an associate degree; and (iii) may include prerequisite courses (other than a remedial course) that meet the requirements of this subparagraph; (B) include competency-based, work-based, or other applied learning that supports the development of academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning and problem-solving skills, work attitudes, employability skills, technical skills, and occupation-specific skills, and knowledge of all aspects of an industry, including entrepreneurship, of an individual; (C) to the extent practicable, coordinate between secondary and postsecondary education programs through programs of study, which may include coordination through articulation agreements, early college high school programs, dual or concurrent enrollment program opportunities, or other credit transfer agreements that provide postsecondary credit or advanced standing; and (D) may include career exploration at the high school level or as early as the middle grades (as such term is defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).

Career Pathway: As defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (29 U.S.C. § 3102(7)), the term "career pathway" means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that: (A) aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved; (B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships; (C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals; (D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; (E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable; (F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized

postsecondary credential; and (G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Certificate: Formal recognition of the completion of a course of study intended to teach specific skills usually associated with a professional field or set of related occupations.

Certifications: Credentials awarded by certification bodies—typically nonprofit organizations, professional associations, industry/trade organizations, or businesses—based on an individual demonstrating, through an examination process, that she or he has acquired the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a specific occupation or job. Depending on the certification body, they may be called industry or professional certifications. Although training may be provided, certifications are not tied to completion of a program of study as are certificates. They are time limited and may be renewed through a recertification process. In addition, some certifications can be revoked for a violation of a code of ethics (if applicable) or proven incompetence after due process.

Competency-Based Education: A program of study based on the mastery of specific information and skills tied to application in the workforce. Competency-Based Programs award credentials based on demonstrated ability rather than participation in course instruction.

Degrees: Associate, baccalaureate, and graduate—are awarded by public and private colleges and universities, and community colleges based on the completion of all requirements for a program of study. Programs of study vary in level, prerequisites, and length. Applied degrees provide enhanced career preparation through programs of study that combine theoretical and practical learning. Degrees are not time limited and do not require renewal.

Degree Inflation: The practice of preferring or requiring a college degree (or other advanced degree) for positions that traditionally have not required that level of education.

Dual-Credit Programs: Allow high school students to enroll in community or technical college courses, receiving both high school and college credit at the same time—credit that can also be transferred to other colleges and universities.

Essential Workers: Workers who conduct a range of operations and services in industries that are thought of as “essential” to the functioning of society.

Frontline Workers: Workers who work in close proximity to the public.

Good Job, Quality Job, Decent Work: These terms often are used interchangeably to describe the kind of outcome many policymakers and advocates are working for—jobs with a fair wage that allow individuals to sustain the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families.

Human Skills, Soft Skills, Professional Skills: Human or soft skills are often used to refer to skills that are less able to be automated, and that are highly transferable across jobs or occupations (e.g., teamwork, communication, critical thinking, creativity).

Industry Skill Standards: The knowledge and skills required for employment in specific industries. Employers or industry boards usually identify and define these skills.

Industry-Recognized Credentials: An industry-recognized credential is one that either is developed and offered by or is endorsed by a nationally recognized industry association or organization representing a sizeable portion of the industry sector, or a credential that is sought or accepted by companies within the industry sector for purposes of hiring or recruitment, which may include credentials from product vendors.

Licenses: Credentials that permit the holder to practice in a specified field. An occupational license is awarded by a government licensing agency based on pre-determined criteria. The criteria may include some combination of degree attainment, certifications, certificates, assessment, apprenticeship programs, and/or work experience. Licenses are time limited and must be renewed periodically. Similar to a certification, a license can be revoked for a violation of a code of ethics (if applicable) or proven incompetence after due process.

Meaningful Work: Work that is fulfilling and satisfying and is aligned with personal values and personal measures for success.

Microcredentials, MicroMasters, Nanocredentials: Forms of certification earned by proving competence in one (or a few) specific skill(s) at a time. Microcredentials are becoming increasingly popular in short-form, online training programs.

Midcareer Workers: Workers who have been in the workforce for more than a decade.

Middle-Wage Jobs: Higher than entry-level or frontline, middle-wage jobs provide a greater opportunity for growth into higher wage jobs and build on skills developed in entry-level positions.

Opportunity Employers: Employers who refine their talent management systems to support the retention and advancement of opportunity talent.

Opportunity Employment: A commitment to recruitment, hiring, and retention and advancement practices that prioritize equity, inclusion, opportunity, and mobility.

Opportunity Gap: Disparities in access to education, training, or pathways to economic mobility for individuals from traditionally untapped talent pools (e.g., people without a two- or four-year degree) who seek economic stability through employment, and are from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

Opportunity Talent: Refers to the talent pool itself.

Opportunity Youth: 16- to 24-year-olds who are neither in school nor participating in the labor market.

Prior Learning Assessment: An assessment process that enables students to earn college credit for learning acquired on the job, through professional or military training, online, or through other education programs. Prior learning assessment (PLA) comprises skill tests, written examinations, work portfolio assessments, or some combination and can accelerate credential earning and degree acquisition, especially for nontraditional college students. May also be referred to as Credit for Prior Learning (CPL).

Program of Study: As defined in Perkins V (20 U.S.C. § 2302(41)), the term “program of study” means a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level that — (A) incorporates challenging State academic standards; (B) addresses both academic and technical knowledge and skills, including employability skills; (C) is aligned with the needs of industries in the economy of the State, region, Tribal community, or local area; (D) progresses in specificity (beginning with all aspects of an industry or career cluster and leading to more occupation-specific instruction); (E) has multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing; and (F) culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs: Earn-and-learn programs that offer classroom instruction and on-the-job training linked to employment. Employers hosting apprentices are integral to the process and typically hire apprentices who earn their credentials. Apprenticeships can be registered at the state or federal level (or both) and have specific requirements for the number of hours apprentices must

participate in classroom and on-the-job training.

Reskilling, Upskilling: Reskilling can be used to describe the process of learning entirely different skills to meet the demands of a new job, while upskilling can refer to a worker augmenting their existing skills to reflect the shifting needs of their employer.

Skill(s) Gap: Generally, the perceived discrepancy between the skills employers are looking for and the skills they believe they can access in the workforce.

Skills-Based Hiring: Practice of setting specific skill or competency requirements for job roles, rather than using requirements like degree attainment.

Stackable Credential: A credential is considered stackable when it is part of a sequence of industry-informed credentials that can be accumulated over time to expand an individual's competencies, help him or her advance within a career pathway, and earn family-sustaining wages. This verbiage is often used in the field of education. The world of work, often refers to this as career progression or career ladder.

Student Support Services: Services designed to facilitate student success in educational programs. These may include career planning and development, case management, mentoring, coaching and tutoring, work-friendly scheduling, federal and state need-based financial aid, job search skills training, job placement assistance, and referral to providers of other supportive services (e.g., transportation, childcare, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits).

Work-Based Learning: On-the-job experiences during an educational course of study (and often for academic credit of some kind) that lead to improved career opportunities.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): The 2014 Federal statute that establishes federal policy direction and appropriates federal funds for employment and training programs. These programs include training for disadvantaged youths, adults, and dislocated workers; adult education and literacy; employment services and labor market information; and rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. Compared to previous legislation, WIOA encourages a system-level view of education and training, encouraging blended investments and strong partnerships between programs and agencies serving people who seek to learn, work, or advance in their careers.

RESOURCES

[The Words of the Workforce - Catalyze \(catalyzechallenge.org\)](https://catalyzechallenge.org/)

[Differing Types of Workplace Credentials - YouTube](#)