

Considerations Guide for Credential Attainment for US Department of Labor (DOL) YouthBuild Grantees

DOL YouthBuild grantees should become familiar with TEGL 15-10, “Increasing Credential, Degree, and Certificate Attainment by Participants of the Public Workforce System,” which describes the criteria for ensuring that credentials are career-enhancing and meet the standards for the degree/certificate attainment performance measure (see *Attachment 2*). Some of the important criteria to consider are whether credentials are stackable and portable. A credential is considered “stackable” when it is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual’s qualifications and help him/her to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs. A credential is considered “portable” when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings, such as a different geographic area, across educational institutions, or by other industries or employers. See TEGL 15-10 for further explanation of the attributes of career-enhancing credentials.

To be consistent with TEGL 15-10, the considerations outlined below should be used to help YouthBuild grantees determine which certifications they should offer to participants. These considerations help grantees to focus on the *value-added* aspects of certifications as they relate to career entry and advancement. Grantees should use these considerations as a guiding tool for designing occupational skills training and certification opportunities for youth, particularly for those programs that were previously funded by DOL and are now considering expansion of training into new labor markets. The considerations outlined below provide a lens through which DOL YouthBuild grantees can ensure that they incorporate key components for successful attainment of credentials into their program design. There is no right or wrong answers to the considerations questions. Rather, these questions frame the intent of providing career-enhancing occupational skills training to youth participants and illustrate what can be gained by selecting stackable and portable credentials, certifications, or degrees that have labor market value; in other words, credentials that are recognized by employers and considered valuable in hiring decisions.

This Considerations Guide provides insight to grantees to consider when selecting occupational skills training curricula that the program will use and the types of credentials to be pursued within each industry. DOL requires each program to offer participants the opportunity to attain an industry-recognized credential in construction. Additionally, with advance approval from DOL, beginning with the 2012 grant awards, those that have been previously-funded may now include additional occupational skills training opportunities in in-demand sectors as part of their DOL YouthBuild program model.

Industry-recognized credentials provide an opportunity for YouthBuild participants to demonstrate and document skills and may lead to advantages in the hiring process, higher earnings, enhanced job security, or advancement along a career pathway. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), between 2012 and 2022, 19 of the 30 fastest growing occupations will require some form of post-secondary education. Moreover, “occupations that

typically require an apprenticeship are projected to grow 22.2 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than any other on-the-job training assignment.” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections - 2012-2022, December 2013)

Definition of Credential

TEGL 15-10 defines “credential” as a broad term that encompasses educational certificates or degrees, occupational licenses, Registered Apprenticeships, and industry-recognized certifications.

Considerations:

1. What is the labor market value of the proposed credential?
 - a. Is the skills training responsive to employer needs and employer-driven (i.e., does the industry drive the curriculum of the credential)?
 - b. Does it meet the skills and competencies as identified by the industry/employer?
 - c. Is the credential recognized by employers and taken into consideration in hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions?
 - d. Are the skills documented through the credential currently in demand in the local labor market?
 - e. Does the training increase the participant’s employment potential in a demand occupation, either nationally or locally?
2. What is the length and intensity of the skills training course of study?
 - a. Are the design, delivery, and duration of the curriculum sufficient to achieve learning outcomes? What is the minimum length of time required to attain the necessary skills for certification?
 - b. Are there opportunities for on-the-job training or internships affiliated with the course of study? Is there a minimum requirement for work-based training?
 - c. Is an apprenticeship required to gain the credential?
3. What are the pre-requisites for the credentialing (educational or otherwise)?
 - a. Is an entrance examination required?
 - b. Is a high school diploma or equivalency required? Can career and technical training be started concurrently with secondary education?
 - c. Are there minimum requirements beyond a high school diploma for each credential offered?
4. What are the affiliated or stackable credentials related to the field(s) under consideration?
 - a. Does it allow students to achieve the skills to get, keep, and progress in a chosen job or to enter further post-secondary or vocational training options?
 - b. Does it incorporate some other educational components beyond the vocational field of study, such as college credit or foundational coursework?
 - c. Are there opportunities for further post-secondary study or training in a related field that lead to additional credentials?

- d. Is the credential embedded in a larger career pathway model (such as the progression from Paramedic or Certified Nursing Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse in which skills demonstrated in each credential provide foundations for the next level) that provides opportunities to continue developing income-enhancing skills and competencies?
 - e. Does the vocational training include apprenticeable fields or lead to apprenticeship opportunities?
 - f. Are other public agencies, including educational institutions, economic development organizations, and human services providers, included in certification development, to ensure the effective leveraging and targeting of public resources aimed at increasing the skills of American workers?
5. Does the credential assist participants with specific barriers to employment to access career pathways?
- a. Does it provide a demonstration of additional training for youth populations that may often be overlooked in hiring (such as justice-involved youth)?
 - b. Are there credentials from which specific populations are excluded— either from attaining the degree or being gainfully employed in the affiliated industry?