EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH CENTER

A Snapshot of State Practices and Plans for Collecting License Data

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Introduction

As interest grows in alternative pathways to careers, so, too, does the importance of understanding the nature of non-degree credentials—e.g., certificates, industry certifications, licenses, and badges—along with their impact on both learners and the labor market. States are becoming increasingly aware of the critical importance of collecting and analyzing data on non-degree credentials to better inform policy. Yet there is no centralized source of data on non-degree credentials or the noncredit offerings with which they may be affiliated. Nor has there been a unified national strategy to bring together the data that are available from various stakeholders like credential issuers, education and training providers, and state agencies. States across the country have begun searching for ways to address this issue at home, and efforts are underway to bring together more national and local data sources, including certification and licensure data that have been challenging to capture.

Since it began in 2021, Rutgers' Education and Employment Research Center's State Noncredit Data Project (SNDP) has been working closely with a growing number of states to help foster the sharing of information and to guide states in their ongoing efforts to build and enhance noncredit data collection systems. The SNDP, comprised of representatives from over 30 states and 72 organizations across the country, seeks to help states capture a comprehensive view of data available on noncredit education, spanning the wide array of non-degree credentials, including certificates, certifications, licenses, badges, and microcredentials. The SNDP regularly convenes a learning community for states that are building their noncredit data infrastructure. To inform these efforts, EERC explored the availability of data on industry certifications in noncredit data in a 2024 report.[1]

The present report expands on that effort to explore the availability of data on licenses. Awarded by a state or federal government agency, licenses are intended to demonstrate skills and competencies in a specific occupation, often through completion of an educational program with an examination and some form of work-based learning.[2] Some examples of licenses that tend to be associated with noncredit offerings are certified nursing assistant licenses, commercial driver's licenses, and massage licenses.[3] Like industry certifications, information on licenses in the context of noncredit data is limited. As states seek to better

[1] Peterson, E. K., Vinton, J., & Van Noy, M. (2024). *A snapshot of state practices and plans for collecting industry and certification data.* Education and Employment Research Center, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2024/08/Snapshot-of-State-Practices_EERC_04.2024.pdf

[2] Van Noy, M., Kerrigan, M. R., & Bjorn, G. (2023). *Building a system for non-degree credential (NDC) quality: A landscape scan of national influences on NDC quality.* Education and Employment Research Center, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

[3] National Conference of State Legislatures. (2022). *The national occupational licensing database* [Dataset]. https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/the-national-occupational-licensing-database

understand the extent to which employers value and students benefit from state licenses, these data are increasingly important. To set the stage for further collection and exploration of licensure data, EERC conducted a survey among participants in the SNDP National Learning Community that was designed to examine whether states track and analyze licensure data. And if they do not, we inquired whether they have plans or an inclination to do so. The survey sought to understand the type of information on licenses states collect or are interested in collecting, how they track and analyze these data, and which, if any, other entities within their state they work with to collect these data.

This report provides an overview of the current status of information on licenses in states' noncredit program data. We first provide an overview of methods. Then, we discuss our findings on data availability—first at the program level, then at the student level. We conclude by considering states' priorities in the collection of licensure data as part of wider noncredit data collection efforts.

Methods

States take differing approaches to the management of licensures. Iowa, for example, has a centralized Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing, where the vast majority of professional licensure is occurring. In many other states, however, licensing authorities are spread across various agencies and departments. Given these variations in licensing governance, collecting comprehensive information about licensure data across an entire state can be challenging.

This survey was intended to lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of which entities in a state are responsible for licensure data. To develop a sample of state-level respondents, EERC leveraged its management of the State Noncredit Data Project (SNDP) Learning Community. Our sample consisted of representatives of state entities who participated in the SNDP Learning Community between September and October 2024. The survey was conducted using Qualtrics survey software and distributed via QR code to attendees at the September 2024 SNDP Learning Community meeting. Research team members followed up with email reminders and verbal reminders during other SNDP meetings. Between September and October of 2024, surveys were sent to representatives of 54 state entities from the SNDP Learning Community. Although the number of responses varied across questions on the survey, the EERC received a total of 28 responses from 21 states, for a response rate of 52 percent. (See Appendix A for a list of states that are represented by respondents in the sample.)

The survey consisted of multiple sections designed to broadly capture information from state entities on their extent of collection and interest in licensure data across multiple levels of analysis: noncredit programs and associated licenses, within-state data collaboration, and student/license-earner outcomes.[4] Survey respondents were representatives of state entities; therefore, the unit of analysis is state entity. (See box below for more on this and other key terms.)

[4] See Appendix B for the survey instrument used in the study and Appendix 3 for raw data tables that correspond to the figures presented in our analysis.

Key Terms

Licenses (or "professional licenses") are non-degree credentials that:

- are awarded by a governmental agency,
- are associated with a test that demonstrates competence,
- may be required to work in a certain occupation, and
- may be associated with the completion of an educational program.

State entity is a term used to describe the various agencies, departments, offices, and organizations associated with a state's noncredit data activities, such as the Department of Labor, Governor's Office, or college system.

Program-level data are data on license-associated noncredit programs offered by providers (educational institutions, training centers, etc.) in each state.

Student-level data are data collected or analyzed on individual students and license earners. These data may be collected by community college systems, state labor agencies, or other types of noncredit-associated entities.

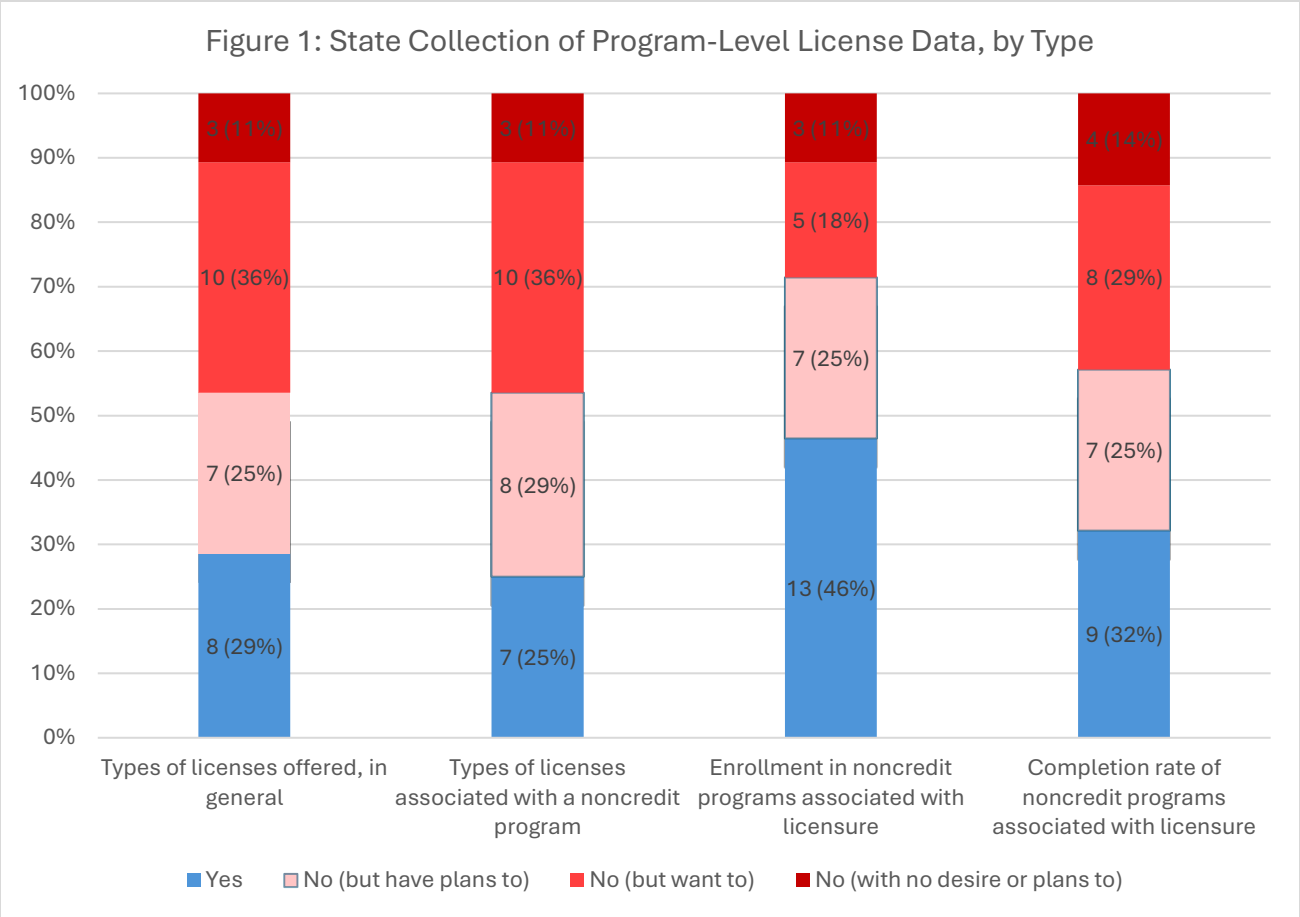
Program-Level Licensure Data

States may track program-level information on licensures, including the types of licenses associated with noncredit programs. These data provide a better understanding of noncredit program offerings and their potential outcomes, but they do not provide information on the outcomes of those who participate in noncredit programs—a topic addressed in greater detail in the Student-Level Licensure Data section of this report. This section discusses states' efforts and interest in the collection of program-level data on licensures, as well as collaborations related to those efforts.

Data collection efforts and interest

Many respondents reported that their state entity collects at least some data on licenses at the program level. While over half of respondents indicated that their state entities collect or intend to collect licensure data, the exact content of these data varied widely. We first asked respondents to indicate the extent of their agencies' licensure data collection and interest across four distinct categories: general licenses offered (i.e., licenses available but not necessarily the programs that offer them), licenses associated with noncredit programs, enrollment in license-associated programs, and completion rates of license-associated programs. Because respondents were asked to respond to each of these categories separately, they were able to indicate whether their agency collects or intends to collect any or all of these four types of licensure data.

As displayed in Figure 1, almost half of respondents (n = 13) reported that their state entity collects data on the enrollment of students in license-associated noncredit programs. Almost a third of respondents (n = 9) indicated that their state entity collects data on the completion rate of licensure-associated noncredit programs. Around a quarter of respondents reported that their state entity collects data on the types of licenses associated with noncredit programs (n = 7) or on the types of licenses offered within the state in general (n = 8).



N=28

The largest group of respondents, however, indicated that their state entity either had plans or a desire to collect these four types of program-level data on licenses, particularly data on the general types of licenses offered and those associated with noncredit programs. Looking at the collection of data on licenses associated with noncredit programs, for example, eight reported that their state entity plans to collect those data in the future, and another ten reported a desire to do so. Together, these responses accounted for nearly two-thirds of the state entities in the study. Similarly, over half of respondents had similar plans or intentions for data collection on licensure completion rates (n = 15).

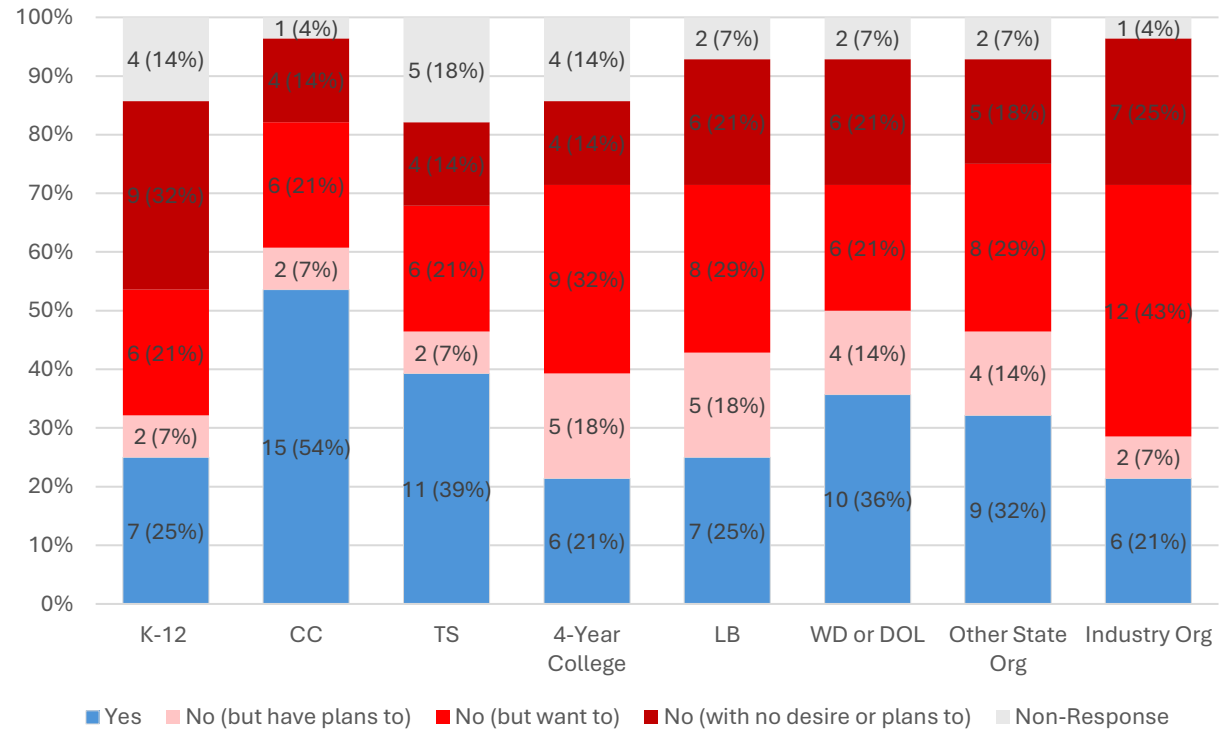
Only three to four respondents reported that their state entity neither collects nor intends to collect data on any of the four program-level elements measured in our study. This indicates that state entities interested in program-level licensure data may be seeking a comprehensive understanding that takes a range of data elements into account.

Collaborations

Various entities in respondents' states collect licensure data at the program level. Many respondents reported that program-level licensure data are collected by entities in their state other than their own. This was true of both respondents who indicated their state entity currently collects those data and those who did not. Just under half of respondents indicated that another entity collects data on which professional licenses are associated with noncredit programs. Figure 2 displays responses regarding state entities' data-sharing activity, plans, and inclinations for each type of collaborating entity, e.g., college systems, state agencies (e.g., commerce, transportation, labor, licensing and regulation, information technology), licensing boards, and workforce development agencies.

State entities often collaborate to collect data on licenses associated with noncredit programs. The entities respondents reported that their state entities most frequently collaborate with to collect data on licenses associated with noncredit programs were community colleges, technical schools, and workforce development or labor agencies.

Figure 2: Collaborative Activity and Plans for Data Collection on Licenses Associated with Noncredit Programs, by Collaborating Entity



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Notes: K-12=K12 Institutions, CC=Community Colleges, TS=Technical Schools, 4-Year College=4-Year Colleges/Universities, LB=Licensing Boards, WD or DOL=Workforce Development or Department of Labor, Other State Org=Other State Agencies/Organizations, Industry Org=Industry/Professional/Trade Organizations

The most common collaborating entity was community colleges—results show that over half of respondents (n =15) reported that their state entity works with community colleges to collect data on licenses associated with noncredit programs. Over a third of respondents (n = 11) indicated that their state entity collects these data with assistance from technical schools, as well as with workforce development agencies and/or DOL in their state (n = 10).

Of all the collaborative entities presented on the survey, respondents were least likely to indicate that their state entities are interested in collaborating with K-12 institutions on licenses associated with noncredit offerings. Almost a third of respondents (n = 9) reported their state entities have no plans or desire to collaborate with K-12 institutions to collect these data.[5]

Nearly half of respondents (n = 12) reported that their state entity wants to collaborate with industry/professional/trade organizations but has no firm plans to do so, highlighting a discrepancy between their current data collection practices and their desired data collection practices. Generally, collaborating with industry/professional/trade organizations is uncommon in the noncredit data space because privacy concerns or a lack of incentive for non-governmental organizations to participate in such efforts make these partnerships challenging for state entities to establish.

This same discrepancy between state entities' desire to collaborate in the collection of licensure data and having a plan to do so was observed in survey responses about possible collaborations with 4-year colleges/universities (n = 9), licensing boards (n = 8), and other state agencies or organizations (n = 8).

[5] State entities may not wish to collaborate with K-12 institutions for two reasons. First, while some secondary students—such as those enrolled in vocational or technical schools or community college CTE programs—may be able to complete noncredit programs and earn licenses, many licenses have a minimum age requirement of 18 years, thus excluding the vast majority of K-12 students. Second, most K-12 schools do not collect licensure data. For more information about licensure and age restrictions, see National Conference of State Legislatures (2022).

Student-Level Licensure Data

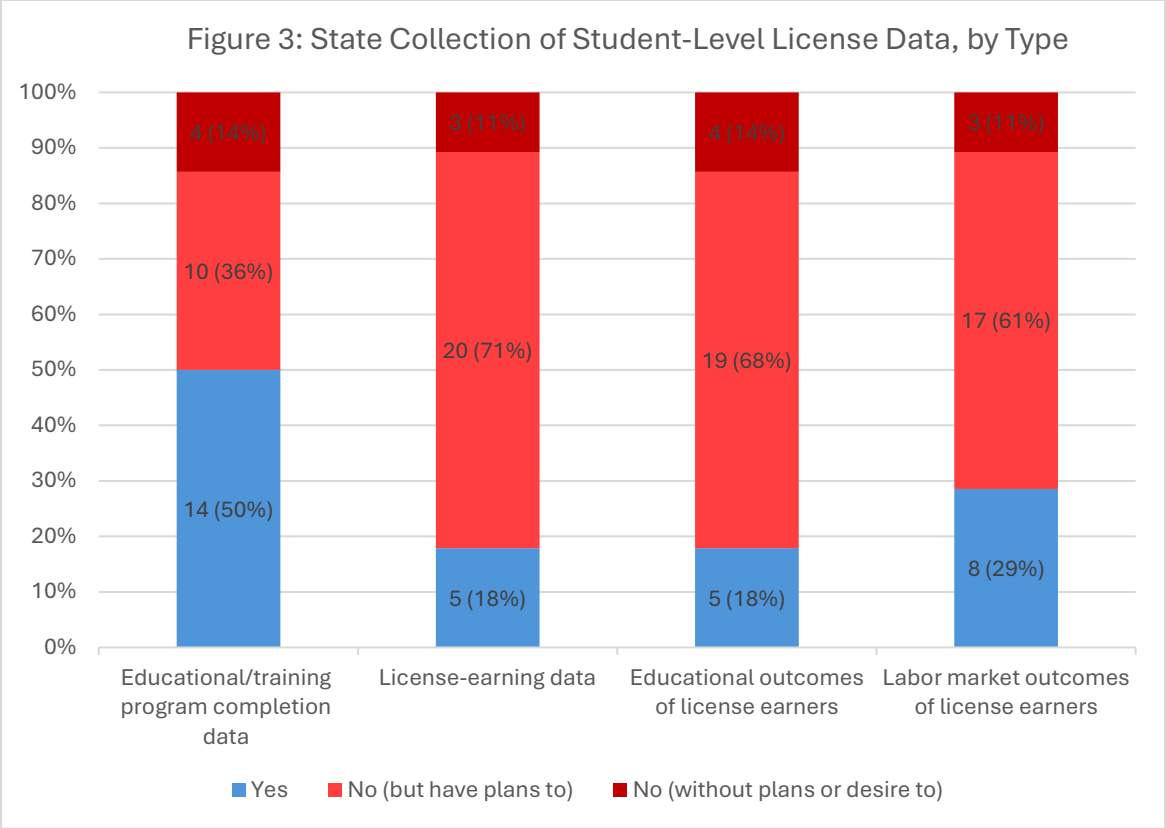
Beyond gaining an understanding of state-level licensure data on program offerings collected by state entities in the SNDP Learning Community, we also examined the extent of data available at the state level on the outcomes of individual participants in licensure-associated programs. To gather this information, states must collect student-level licensure data. This section discusses states' efforts and interest in collecting these data, as well as collaborations involved in those efforts.

Data Collection Efforts and Interests

Many respondents indicated that their state entity has data on whether students complete programs associated with licenses, but few collect data on whether students earn a license or on the labor market and educational outcomes associated with license earning. Almost half of the respondents (n = 13) indicated that their state entity currently collects data on whether a student completes the noncredit educational/training program in which they are enrolled. Less than a third reported that their state entity actively collects the labor market outcomes of license earners (n = 8), and less than a fifth indicated that their state entity currently collects data on the post-program educational outcomes of students in license preparation programs (n = 5).

Most respondents reported that their state entities are poised to launch new efforts to collect student-level data associated with licensure. About two-thirds of respondents shared that their state entities have plans in place to collect or analyze data on whether participants in licensure-associated noncredit programs earned a license (n = 20) and/or on license earners' education pathways (Did students go on to further education after enrollment in or completion of their noncredit educational/training program?; n = 19). Well over half (n = 17) of respondents indicated that their state entity has plans to collect or analyze data on labor market outcomes.

Few respondents reported that their state entities have no inclination to collect student-level licensure data. A small number of respondents (n = 3–4 on each data element) indicated that their state entity does not collect student data related to license earners. All but one of these respondents, however, reported that another state entity collects data on license earners in noncredit programs, which underscores the way that licensure data is diffused across different entities within states.



N=28

Nearly all respondents (n = 25) indicated that data on educational and labor market outcomes of license earners are valuable for their state entity, but many do not have access to these data. Respondents provided examples of the benefits tracking outcomes would bring to their state entity, including understanding the labor market value of licenses, demonstrating ROI of licensure and noncredit programs, meeting cross-sector learning goals, measuring student success, and improving students' social and economic mobility.

Many respondents reported that their state entities believe the tracking of license earners is important because it allows them to understand and demonstrate the value of licenses and license-associated programs. Less common motivations for the tracking of outcomes data cited by respondents included program improvement, marketing, state interest, and industry validation.

Collaborations

It was relatively rare for the respondents in our study to report that their state entities receive student-level license-earning data from other state entities: only six respondents indicated other entities in their state share license-earner data with them. However, an additional five respondents reported that their state entity has laid the groundwork for entering into such data-sharing arrangements in the future. It was far more common for respondents to express that their state entity wishes to enter data-sharing agreements with other state

entities but has no current plans in place for doing so (n = 16). Respondents provided examples of the mechanisms through which these data might be shared between entities within a state. These include memoranda of understanding, data-sharing agreements, and, more broadly, state longitudinal data systems.

When respondents who reported that another state entity collects data on individual license earners were asked to identify those entity types, their responses varied widely, with no type of entity garnering more than three mentions. Of the ten different types of entities mentioned, the most common were college systems, labor agencies, departments of transportation, and departments of commerce.

Licensure Data Priorities

Most respondents indicated that their state entities prioritize or plan to prioritize certain licenses based on employer demand. Almost half of respondents reported that their state entities prioritize certain licenses based on employer demand (n = 13), and a slightly smaller number of respondents reported having plans to do so in the future (n = 8). About a quarter reported that their state does not prioritize licenses in this way and has no plans to do so (n = 7). Among the 13 respondents who reported that their state entities prioritized certain licenses based on employer demand, there was great variety in terms of the mechanism used to determine those priority licenses, with the most notable theme being funding and scholarship dollars. Funding has been noted as a driver of noncredit data collection by noncredit scholars.[6]

Respondents reported that their state entities are particularly interested in using noncredit licensure data to promote industry alignment and validation. Respondents indicated that their state entities valued the collection of data on professional licenses associated with noncredit programs for many reasons. The most common reasons they cited were to ensure industry alignment and validation, to develop a comprehensive understanding of offerings, and to find out more about outcomes. Of the sample of 28, 7 respondents did not respond to this item.

[6] Van Noy, M., D'Amico, M., Peterson, E. K., Vinton, J., Hilliard, T., Srivastava, A., Xu, D., & Bahr, P. R. (2024). *State noncredit data infrastructure cross-state report*. Education and Employment Research Center, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2024/11/SNDP_Cross-State-Report_11.2024.pdf

Conclusion

Licensure data is an area of great promise for those interested in building out noncredit data sets associated with relevant labor market outcomes. Our findings from this survey of state entities from across the country indicate that there may be a gap between the plans of state entities and their current licensure data practices. This survey also emphasizes the fact that licensure data, like data on many other non-degree credentials, is highly fragmented, spread across various entities within a state. There is little doubt that engaging various stakeholders to enter into data-sharing agreements or other models of data collaboration can be a challenge. The State Noncredit Data Project aims to make that process easier by providing states with the information they need to draw on the lessons of those who are already engaging in this important work.

Appendix A

Table A1: States Represented in Survey Responses

State	Frequency	Percent
Arkansas	1	3.57
Connecticut	1	3.57
Georgia	1	3.57
Illinois	1	3.57
Iowa	2	7.14
Louisiana	3	10.71
Maryland	1	3.57
Massachusetts	1	3.57
Montana	1	3.57
Nebraska	1	3.57
New Jersey	2	7.14
New Mexico	1	3.57
New York	1	3.57
North Carolina	2	7.14
North Dakota	1	3.57
Ohio	1	3.57
Oklahoma	1	3.57
Oregon	2	7.14
South Carolina	1	3.57
Tennessee	2	7.14
Virginia	1	3.57
Total	28	100.00

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

1. Please select the name of your state.

2. Please write the name of your agency/organization.

3. Please choose the option that best describes your agency/organization.
    a. Board of Governors/Regents
    b. College/University System
    c. Community College System
    d. Community College Association
    e. Coordinating Board
    f. Data/IT Agency
    g. Department of Education
    h. Department of Labor/Workforce Agency
    i. Governing Agency/Board
    j. Governor's Office
    k. Higher Ed Agency
    l. Higher Ed Commission
    m. Nonprofit Organization
    n. University System

The next few questions pertain to data on licenses associated with noncredit programs offered by providers in your state, not data on individual students enrolled in noncredit offerings.

Licenses (or "professional licenses") are a type of non-degree credential that:

- Are awarded by a governmental agency
- Are associated with a test that demonstrates competence
- May be required to work in a certain occupation
- May be associated with the completion of an educational program

4. Does your agency/organization collect data on which professional licenses are associated with noncredit programs?
    a. Yes
    b. No, but there are plans to do so.
    c. No, and there are no plans to do so.

5. Why is collecting data on professional licenses associated with noncredit programs important to your agency/organization? _____

6. Select the statement that most accurately reflects whether your agency/organization collects the following types of data on licenses at the program level.

	Yes, we currently collect these data (1)	No, but we have plans to collect these data (2)	No, but we want to collect these data (3)	No, we do not collect these data, and have no plans or desire to do so (4)
Types of licenses offered, in general (1)	○	○	○	○
Types of licenses associated with a noncredit program (4)	○	○	○	○
Enrollment in noncredit programs associated with licensure (5)	○	○	○	○
Completion rate of noncredit programs associated with licensure (6)	○	○	○	○

7. To your knowledge, does another agency/organization in your state collect data on which professional licenses are associated with noncredit programs?
    a. Yes, another agency/organization in my state does collect these data. [Please name them below.] _____
    b. No other agency/organization that I am aware of collects these data.

8. Select the statement that most accurately reflects whether your agency/organization collaborates with the following groups to collect information on professional licenses associated with noncredit programs.

	Yes, we are currently collaborating on data collection (1)	No, but we have plans to (2)	No, but we want to (3)	No, and we have no plans or desire to do so (4)
K-12 institutions (1)	○	○	○	○
Community colleges (4)	○	○	○	○
Technical schools (5)	○	○	○	○
4-year colleges/universities (6)	○	○	○	○
Licensing boards (7)	○	○	○	○
Workforce Development Agency or Department of Labor (8)	○	○	○	○
Other State agencies/organizations (9)	○	○	○	○
Industry/professional/trade organizations (10)	○	○	○	○

The next few questions will ask about the data collected or analyzed on individual students and license earners.

9. Select the statement that most accurately reflects whether your agency/organization collects and/or analyzes the following types of data on students enrolled in noncredit programs.

	Yes, we collect and analyze these data (1)	Yes, we collect these data (2)	No, but there are plans to collect and/or analyze these data (3)	No, and there are no plans or desire to do so (4)
Educational/training program completion data (Did you complete your noncredit educational/training program?) (4)	○	○	○	○
License earning data (Did you earn the license associated with your noncredit educational/training program?) (5)	○	○	○	○
Educational outcomes of license earners (Did you go on to further education after enrollment in or completion of your noncredit educational/training program?) (6)	○	○	○	○
Labor market outcomes of license earners (How did this license improve your job prospects, wages, etc.?) (7)	○	○	○	○

10. How does your agency/organization collect data on labor market outcomes for individual license earners from noncredit programs?
    a. Directly from licensing boards
    b. Directly from another state agency
    c. Self-reported from students

d. From employer surveys
e. From another data source or process: _____

11. To your knowledge, does another agency/organization in your state collect data on professional license earners enrolled in or completing noncredit programs?
    a. Yes, another agency/organization, named below, collects these data: _____
    b. No other agency/organization collects these data

12. Which other education/training providers in your state would be interested in collecting data on the educational or labor market outcomes for professional license earners in noncredit programs? (Select all that apply)
    a. K-12 schools
    b. Workforce Development Agency or Department of Labor
    c. Community colleges
    d. Technical schools
    e. 4-year colleges/universities
    f. Other _____

13. Do different agencies/organizations in your state share data on individual license earners from noncredit programs with your agency/organization?
    a. Yes, the following agency/organization shares these data with us:
    b. No, but there are plans to do so with the following agency/organization:
    c. No, but we want to.
    d. No, and there are no plans or desire to do so

14. Through which mechanisms might these data be shared between agencies/organizations in the state?

15. Is tracking the educational and/or labor market outcomes of license earners valuable for your agency/organization?
    a. Yes
        i. Why is tracking the outcomes of license earners valuable for your agency/organization? _____
    b. No
        i. Why is it that tracking the outcomes of license earners is not valuable to your agency/organization? _____

16. Has the state prioritized certain licenses based on employer demand (via a preferred credentials list, funding model, or other mechanism)?
    a. Yes, by…. _____
    b. No, but there are plans to do so.
    c. No, and there are no plans to do so.

17. Is there a link or resource that provides this information on employer demand? If so, please write the name of the resource or paste the link below?

18. What types of licenses does your organization/agency think are the most valuable to have data on?

19. Which industries is your organization/agency most interested in collecting noncredit and licensure date on, and why?
    a. Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
    b. Architecture and Construction
    c. Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications
    d. Business Management and Administration
    e. Education and Training
    f. Energy
    g. Finance
    h. Government and Public Administration
    i. Health Science
    j. Hospitality and Tourism
    k. Human Services
    l. Information Technology
    m. Law, Public Safety, and Corrections
    n. Manufacturing
    o. Marketing
    p. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
    q. Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

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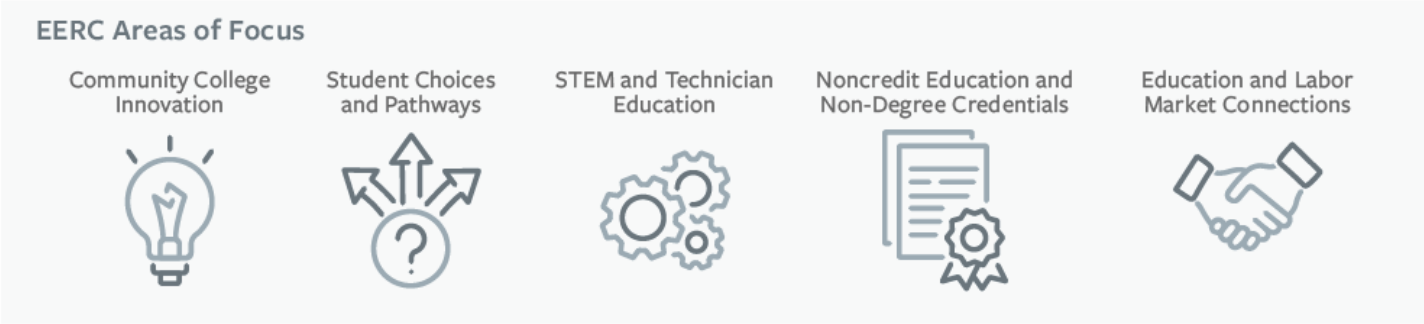

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