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School of Management and Labor Relations
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH CENTER

Assessing the Value of Non-Degree Credentials

Michelle Van Noy
Education and Employment Research Center, Rutgers University

National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges
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Rising Interest in NDCs

- Individual preference
  - Over 2/3 of adults considering education prefer nondegree, up from 1/2 pre-pandemic (Strada, 2020).
  - Among “great resigners”, 72% are enrolling in programs that are 6 months or shorter (Cengage, 2022).
- State funding investments
  - Examples: Get There FL, IN Next Level Jobs, NJ Pay It Forward, LA MJ Foster, VA Fast Forward, and others.

Proliferation of NDCs

- Estimated over 500,000 non-degree credentials offerings according to Credential Engine 2022 estimates

- WorkCred definitions provide helpful distinctions (https://workcred.org/Interactive-Graphics/How-Do-Credentials-Differ-Degree.aspx)

- Efforts to promote quality exist and new ones are emergent.

Key Steps to Assessing the Value of Non-Degree Credentials….

- Define Non-degree Credentials
- Build the Data Infrastructure
- Define Quality
- Build the Quality Ecosystem

Non-degree Credentials

Many Types of NDCs

- For-credit certificates
- Noncredit certificates
- Certifications
- License
- Apprenticeship
- Badges/microcredentials

For-credit Certificates

- Credential awarded by an educational institution for completion of a credit educational program, usually less than one year in length (short-term and long-term credit)
- Key providers are post-secondary educational institutions
- Vary a lot in duration and intensity, also educational level
- Over 50,000 certificates (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Influences on quality include accreditors, state departments of education and labor, and others

Noncredit Certificates

- Credential awarded for completion of an educational program that does not count towards academic credit
- Key providers include post-secondary educational institutions, training providers, employers, labor unions, industry associations
- Vary a lot in duration and intensity, also educational level
- Estimated over 58,000 noncredit certificates from postsecondary institutions (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Influences on quality include state departments of education and labor, ANSI National Accreditation Board, and others

Certifications

- Credential awarded by an industry body or governmental agency for demonstration of skills typically via examination based on industry or occupational standards.
- Key providers are industry certification bodies
- Can be earned in combination with a degree, and can be associated with programs/degrees
- Estimated over 7,000 certifications (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Key influencers include ANSI National Accreditation Board, Institute for Credentialing Excellence, National Commission for Certifying Agencies, state departments of education and labor, and others

Licenses

- Credential awarded by a governmental agency for demonstration of skills in a specific occupation and sometimes also completion of an educational program; often required to work in an occupation.
- Key providers include government agencies
- Can be earned in combination with a degree, and can be associated with programs/degrees
- Estimated over 12,000 licenses (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Key influences include government agencies, professional associations, and others

Apprenticeship

- Credential awarded after completion of structured educational and workplace program based on industry and occupational standards.
- Key providers include government agencies
- Can sometimes be earned at the same time as a degree
- Registered apprenticeship process sets standards
- Estimated over 27,000 apprenticeships (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Key influences include government agencies, unions, professional associations, and others

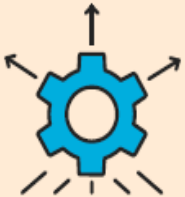
Badges/Microcredentials

- Credential awarded for completion of a short program of study or demonstration of a targeted set of skills; these are newly emerging and are still being developed.
- Key providers include post-secondary educational institutions, training providers, employers, labor unions, industry associations
- Include a digital component
- A great of variation in these awards
- Colleges/universities are developing policies, standards are under development, very similar to certificates
- Estimated over 430,000 digital badges (Credential Engine, 2022)
- Influences on quality include state departments of education and labor, badging platforms, and others

Types of Noncredit Education

- Four broad types of noncredit education (D'Amico et al., 2014)
  - Occupational Training
  - Sponsored Occupational (Contract) Training
  - Personal Interest
  - Pre-College Remediation
- NDCs are often part of occupational training and contract training. Certificates, badges, and microcredentials can be awarded; certifications and licenses can be earned after.

Link Between Noncredit Occupational Education & Outcomes

Education Levels of Occupations	Scope of Skills	Labor Market Outcomes
Sub-Baccalaureate occupations	 A **full set of skills** needed to work in an occupation	Direct Link to well-paying jobs
		Low-paying jobs with pathways to well-paying jobs
		Low-paying jobs with limited or no pathways to well-paying jobs
Bachelor's degree occupations	A **targeted set of skills** to enhance entry or advancement within an occupation or set of occupations.	**The occupational goals of either entering or advancing in an occupation.**

Building the Data Infrastructure

Rutgers State Noncredit Data Project

Better understand noncredit – what is it??

Identify and document noncredit program characteristics in each state; generate state reports

Develop a taxonomy of noncredit to guide data collection efforts

Compare noncredit program characteristics across states and convene working group to build the taxonomy; generate cross state reports

Create a network of states dedicated to building the noncredit data infrastructure

Share lessons via a learning community of states and additional publications and presentations; over 30 states currently engaged

Project Phases

- With support from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center is partnering with states to examine their state-level noncredit data.
- Phase 1: Iowa, Louisiana, Virginia
  - Noncredit data inventory
  - Capturing course/program level data
  - Develop noncredit data taxonomy across states
- Phase 2: Expand to other states through three roles
  - Established state research partners similar to IA, LA, VA
  - Emerging state research partners
  - Learning community members
- Phase 3: National scan of state noncredit data and policy
- Future phases: Student-level analyses, student experiences, quality

Project Team

Noncredit Researchers:
- Michelle Van Noy, PI, Rutgers University
- Mark D'Amico, co-PI, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- Peter Bahr, University of Michigan
- Di Xu, University of California – Irvine
- Anjali Srivastava – Rutgers University

Phase 1, State Partners:
- Iowa team – Paula Nissen, Vladimir Bassis
- Virginia team – Catherine Finnegan, Marina Bagreev
- Louisiana team – Amy Cable

Phase 2, State Partners:
- New Jersey, South Carolina, Oregon & 2 others TBD

Data Inventory and Definitions

Courses/Programs

- Field of Study (name, CIP, SOC, Career Cluster)
- Type (occupational, sponsored, pre-college, personal interest)

Outcomes

- Non-degree Credentials (industry certification, occupational license, college-issued certificate, micro-credential, apprenticeship)
- Noncredit-to-credit articulation
- Student Outcomes (continue to credit, completion, employment, salary/wages)

Instructional Characteristics

- Length (number of classes for program, contact hours)
- Admission Requirements (prerequisites, tests, age)
- Delivery (F2F, location, online, blended, competency-based)
- Work-based learning requirement
- Faculty (FT credit/noncredit, FT noncredit, PT/adjunct, external/contract)

Finance

- Tuition
- Government Funding (state reimbursement, WIOA eligible, econ development incentive, other federal and state grants)

Enrollment

- Headcount
- Demographics (race/ethnicity, age, sex/gender)
- Prior Educational Attainment

Student Services

- Academic Advising
- Career Advising
- Nonacademic Support

Identifiers

- ID types (SS#, institutional ID, consistent ID, student names, birth dates)

Classifying Noncredit Offerings

- Standard definitions are needed to make proper comparisons across states
  - Various definitions surrounding noncredit courses and programs lead to confusion and inconsistencies
    - E.g., wide variability in the number of offerings and data elements
  - We have chosen to use the term “offerings” as a combination of all noncredit courses, programs, etc.

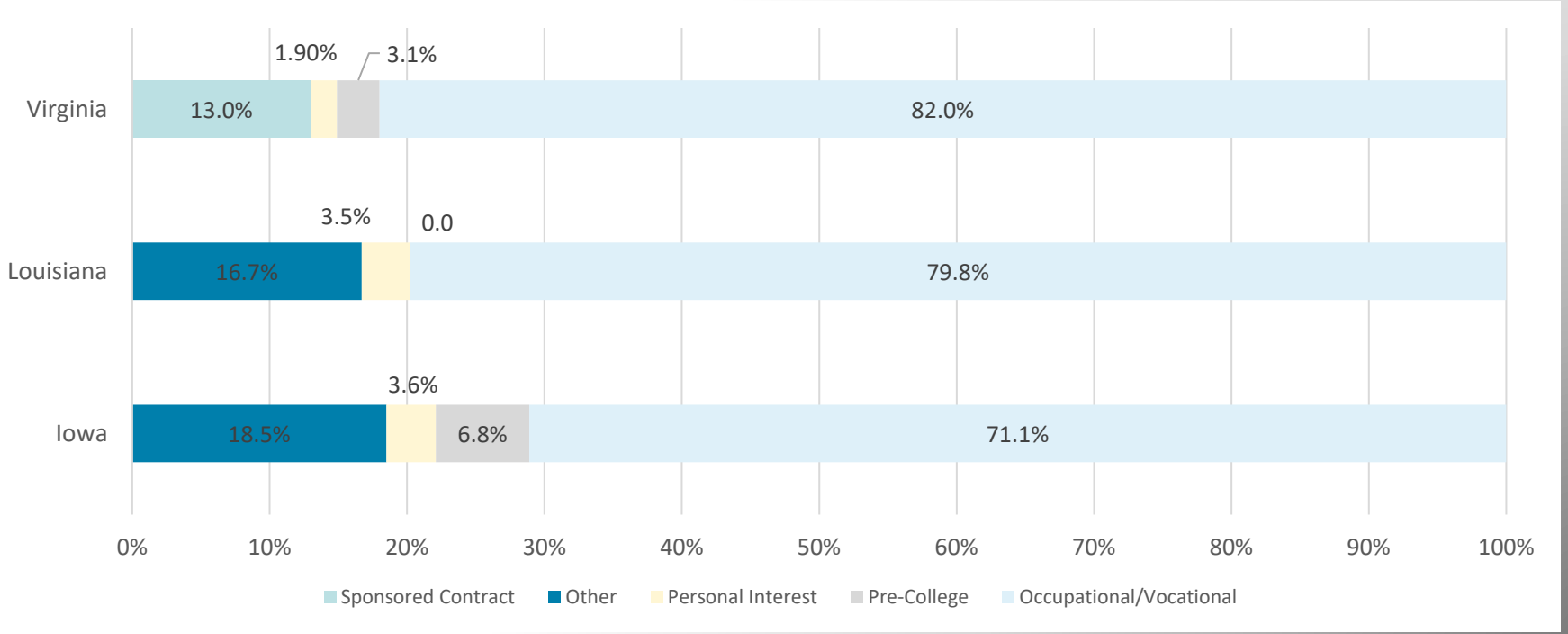
State's Definitions and Methods for Identifying Unique Offerings

State	Number Unique Offerings	Definition of Unique Offering	Offering is Necessarily Unique to a College	Note on Colleges Offering Data
Iowa	924	Course or program uses a unique CIP code	no	Across Iowa's 15 community colleges
Louisiana	397	Unique combination of course and program name	yes	From 8 of 12 community colleges in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Virginia	6,045	A specific course is offered at a specific time by a college	yes	Across colleges within the Virginia Community College System

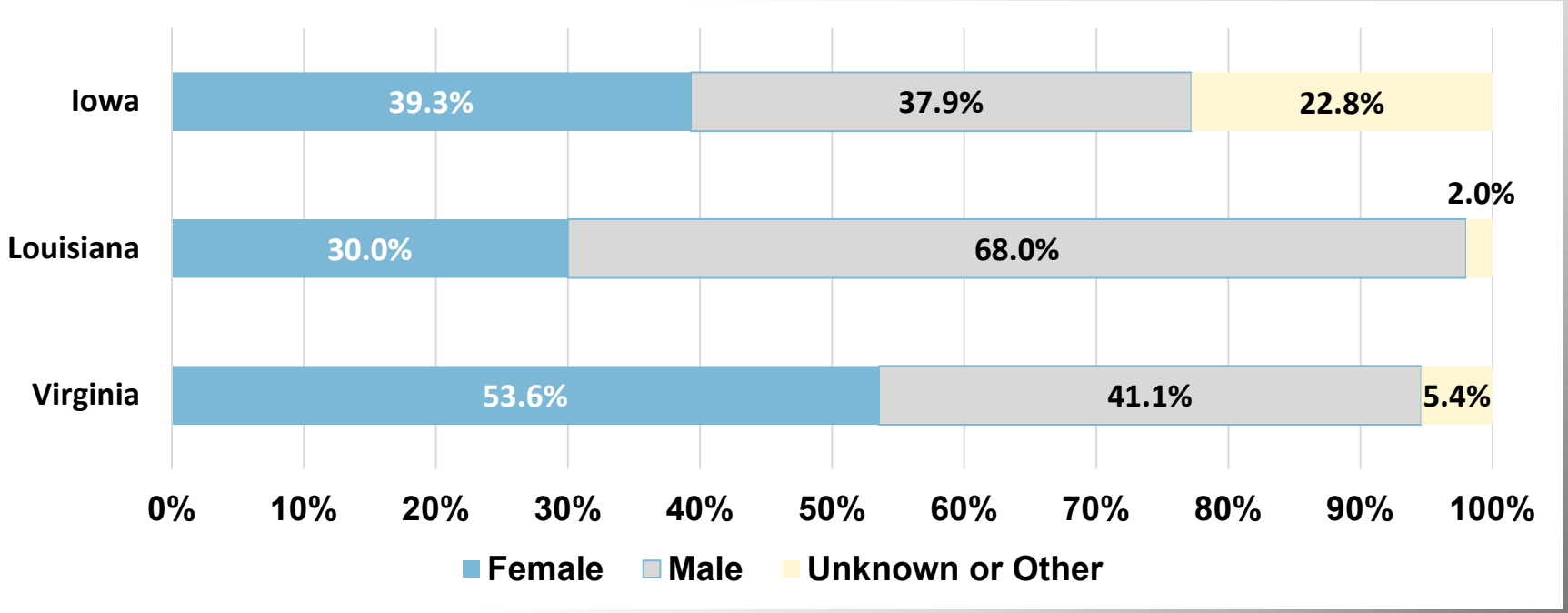
Key Findings: Offerings and Enrollment

- The most common noncredit offerings were workforce-oriented
  - Also the type of offering with the highest student enrollment
- Gender distribution varies by state
  - Women from Iowa and Virginia are more commonly enrolled in vocational offerings
- Data on race and ethnicity are often missing in noncredit studies
  - However, current data on noncredit enrollment by race reflects general credit enrollment

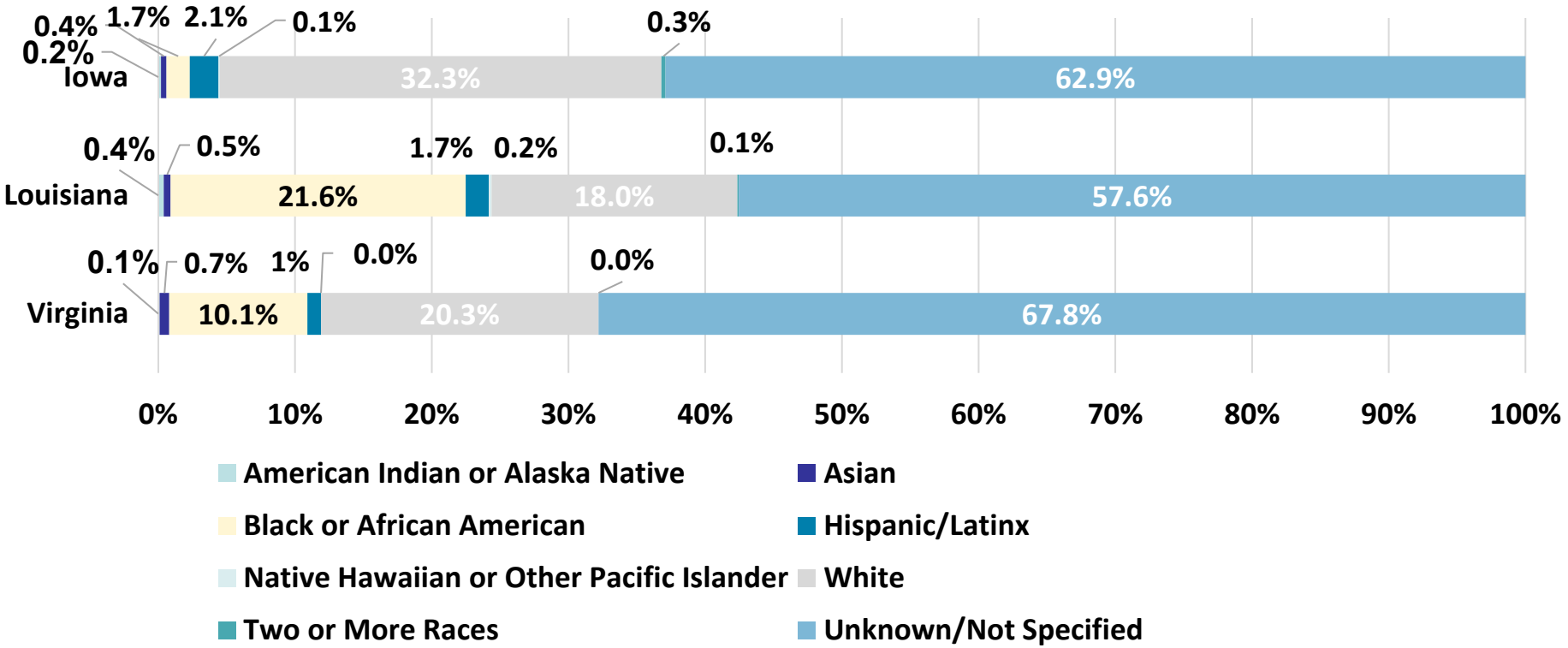
Percent of Noncredit Offerings by Type



Percent Enrollment in Occupational/Vocational Noncredit by Sex



Percent Enrollment in Occupational/Vocational Noncredit by Race



Key Findings: Instructional Characteristics

- Length of noncredit programs varies but much is quite short
  - Most and average offerings do not reach the 150-hour threshold required by short-term Pell Grants
  - Contact hours are most for:
    - FastForward in Virginia, occupational training in Louisiana, pre-college offerings in Iowa
- Noncredit is offered in a variety of modalities
  - The most common is in person, even post-pandemic
- States varied in types of credential awarded through occupational offerings
  - Certificate, certification, or both

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Instructional Characteristics/Credentials by Noncredit Type

Noncredit Type	N	Contact Hours		Delivery			Associated Credential			
		Median	Mean	% F2F	% Hybrid	% Online	N for College Cert.	College Awarded Certificate	N for Industry Cert.	Industry Awarded Cert.
Occupational Training										
Iowa	657	26	51	75%	7%	46%	280	80%	280	54%
Louisiana**	316	40	114	97%	6%	33%	364	75%	233	93%
Virginia										
FastForward	2,006	100	112	92%	5%	3%	2006	NA	2006	100%
Non-FastForward	2,952	15	35	61%	4%	35%	2952	NA	2952	0%
Pre-College*										
Iowa	63	97	114	89%	13%	30%	3	33%	3	0%
Virginia	187	50	87	96%	0%	4%	187	NA	187	0%
Personal Interest										
Iowa	33	11	16	73%	0%	61%	4	100%	4	75%
Louisiana	14	30	29	100%	0%	29%	364	56%	233	89%
Virginia	117	6	9	65%	1%	34%	117	NA	117	0%

*The Pre-College category is Not Applicable for Louisiana
**Data for Louisiana is 8 out of 12 colleges.

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Outcomes: Key Findings

- Attainment Measures
  - All partner states generally track completion rates
    - Despite completion having an inconsistent definition
- Employment Measures
  - Harder to track since they are collected externally to the college
    - Colleges must rely on labor market data
- Partnerships drive and enable states to accurately measure outcomes data
  - Data matching often requires state agency partnerships
  - These partnerships have been established over time alongside the development of noncredit data systems

Outcomes: Completion and Labor Market Data Availability by Noncredit Type

Noncredit Type	N	Completion Data	Labor Market Data			
		% with Completion Data	% with Pre-Enrollment Employment Data	% with Post-Enrollment Employment Data	% with Pre-Enrollment Salary/ Wage Data	% with Post-Enrollment Salary/ Wage Data
Occupational Training						
Iowa	657	100.0%	42.6%	42.6%	42.6%	42.6%
Louisiana	316	99.0%	9.8%	9.8%	4.8%	1.9%
Virginia						
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Virginia	187	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Personal Interest						
Iowa	33	100.0%	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%
Louisiana	14	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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Outcomes: Data Partners and Types Data Matched to Noncredit

Iowa Department of Education	Louisiana	Virginia
• **Iowa Department of Corrections (incarceration-related data for students in incarceration and comparison groups)** • **Iowa Department of Education (Iowa high school students/graduates)** • **Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals (Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) licensing)** • **Iowa Department of Public Health (health occupational and related licenses—other than CAN)** • **Iowa Department of Transportation (commercial drivers licenses)** • **Iowa Workforce Development (employment and wages)** • **National Student Clearinghouse (postsecondary enrollment)**	• Louisiana Workforce Commission (employment and wages) • Louisiana Board of Regents (enrollment and completers) • Department of Children and Family Services- Snap Employment and Training (enrollment and completers) • National Student Clearinghouse (post-secondary enrollment	• Virginia Employment Commission (employment and wages) • National Student Clearinghouse (postsecondary enrollment) • Virginia Department of Health Professions (Nursing and other health occupational and related licenses—Including CNA) • Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (skilled trades, cosmetology, athletics and other regulated occupational licenses https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/node/6) • Virginia Department of Social Services (as a SNAP 50/50 provider and for special research and collaborative projects)

Lessons Learned

- Courses vs. programs vs. offerings
- Variation among states AND program types in terms of what is collected
- Using data to “make the case”
- The data infrastructure builds over time
- Programming and funding tied to economic development and state initiatives
- Without standard definitions, interpretation is necessary
- Credentials of quality drive funding and structure
- State-level verification helps ensure quality data

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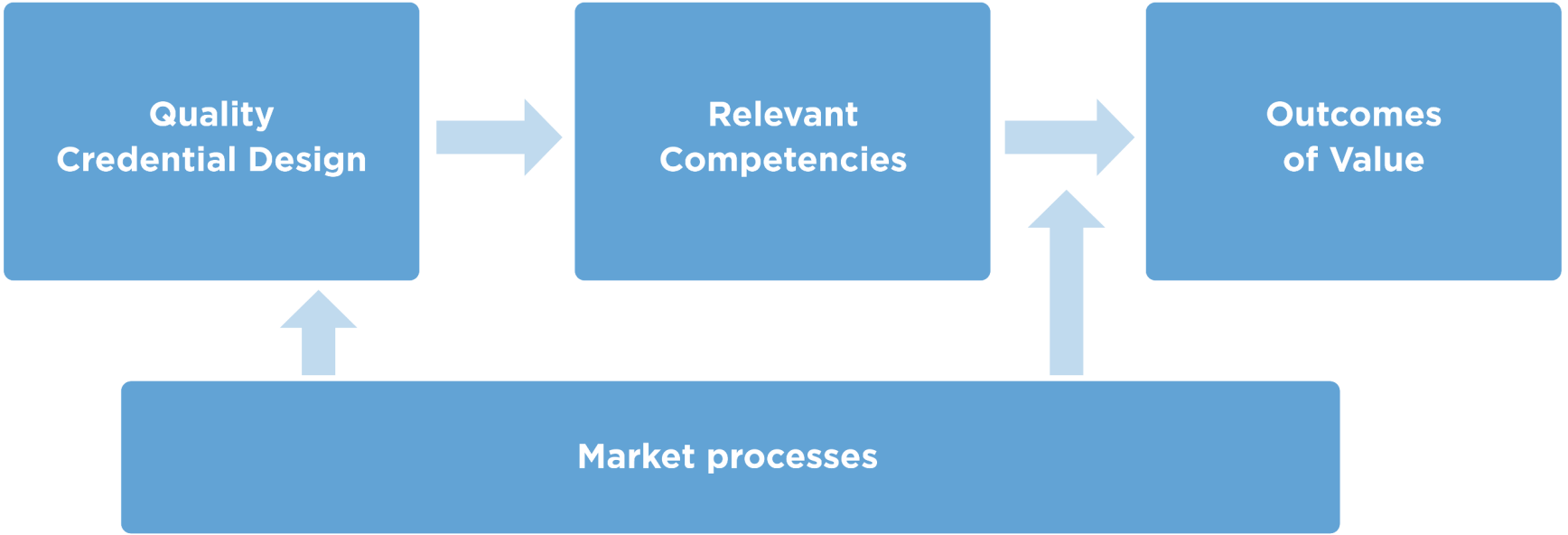
To download reports from our State Noncredit Data Project…

Definitions of Quality

Many Definitions of NDC/Credential Quality

- **National Skills Coalition...** Documented Job opportunities, Competencies; Employment outcomes, stackabilty (optional)
- **Education Strategy Group…** In-demand occupation, Employer use in hiring, education articulation
- **New America…** strong labor market outcomes, advances equity in occupations, educational articulation, affordable, strong completion
- **Gates Postsecondary Value Commission…** Employment outcomes
- **Lumina Quality Credentials Task Force...** Multiple measures of credential design and outcomes
- And others

Commonalities in NDC Quality Definitions



Quality Definitions Relate to Stakeholder Goals

Stakeholder	*Goal*	*Key Questions to Consider*
Individuals	Informed decision making	How do we know as an individual whether it is a good investment of time and money to pursue an NDC?
Employer	Informed decision making	How do we know whether NDCs are a useful indicator of skill and competency to be used in hiring and advancement?
Policy Makers	Accountability	How do we know whether public funds should be used to support the attainment of NDCs?
Credential Providers	Program Improvement	How can NDCs be improved?

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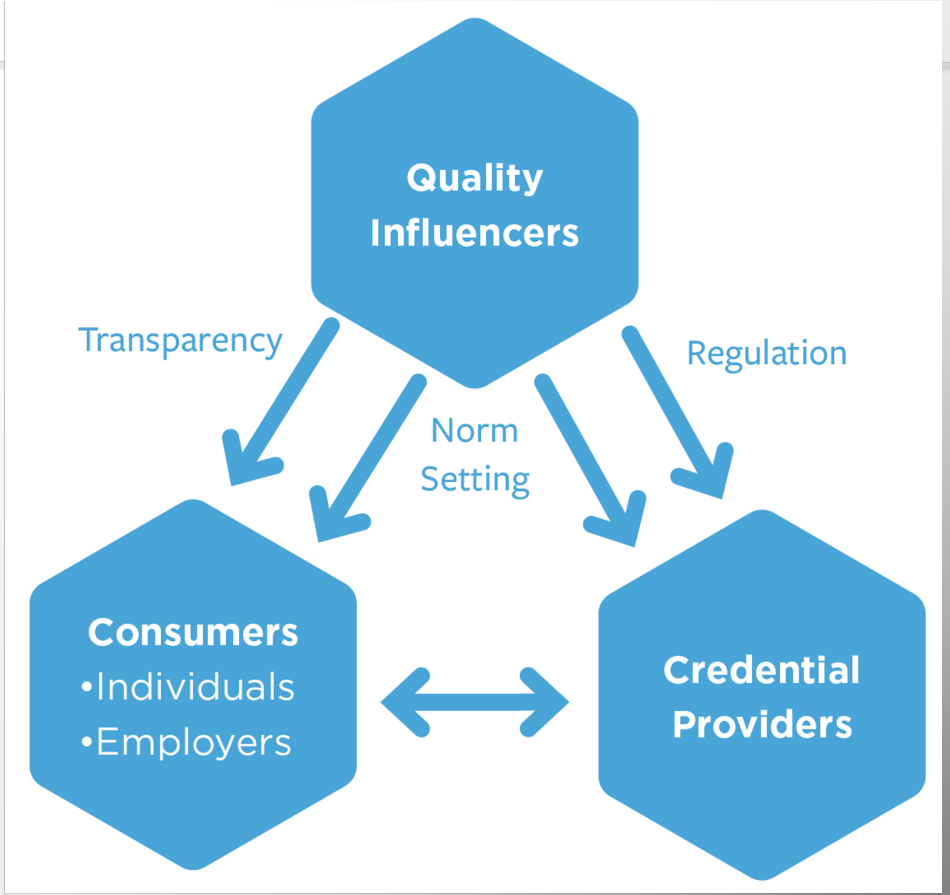
NDC Quality Ecosystem

Beginning Snapshot of the NDC Quality Ecosystem



Credential Providers of NDCs

Educational Institutions - 4 year and 2 year, credit and noncredit

Private training providers, boot camps, online, and emerging providers

Private companies

Professional and industry associations

Joint training funds

State occupational licensing departments

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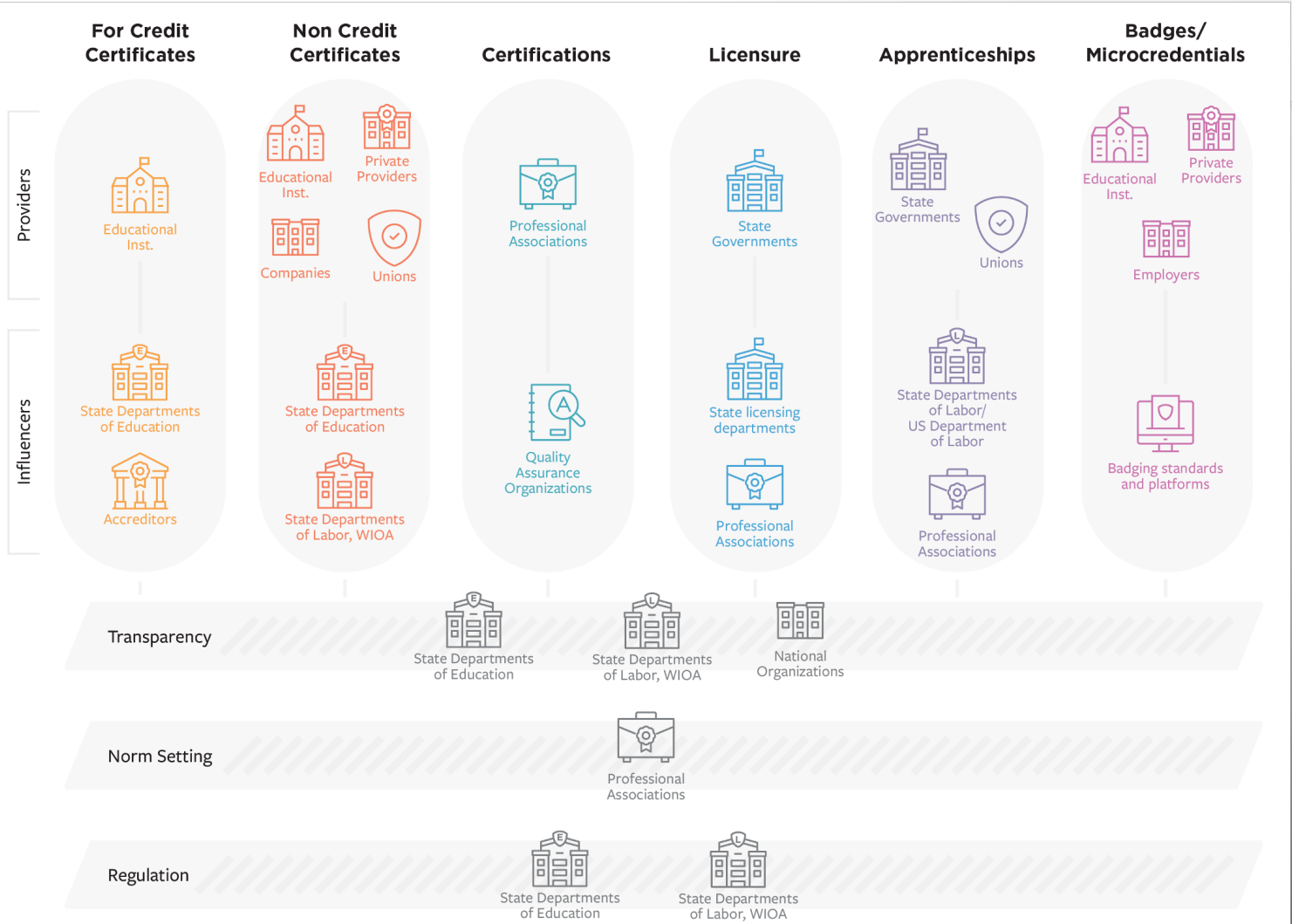
Multiple NDC Markets Exist



Quality Influencers: Organizations Promoting Transparency and/or Norm Setting, Across NDCs

- Credential Engine
- State Departments of Labor, Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPL)
- The Council on Integrity in Result Reporting
- Education Quality Outcomes Standards Board (EQOS)
- Badging Standards and Platforms
- And others…

Quality Influencers: Government Entities—Regulate and Set Norms, Across NDCs and Within NDC Types

- State Departments of Education, Noncredit Funding Oversight
- State Departments of Labor, WIOA Funding Oversight
- Various State Agencies, Proprietary School Oversight
- State Occupational Licensing Departments, Oversight of Licensure Processes and Standards
- US Department of Labor, Apprenticeship Oversight

Quality Influencers: Quality Assurance Bodies—Set Norms for Industry Certifications, Certificates

- ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB)
- Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE)
- National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)
- ISO/IEC 17024
- Assessment-Based Certificate Accreditation Programs (ACAP)

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Quality Influencers: Higher Education Accreditors—Set Norms for Certificates

- Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
- Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
- Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
- EFMD Quality Improvement System (EQUIS)
- Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges
- The Middle States Association Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS)
- Former Regional Higher Education Accreditation Agencies.

How to Bring Together and Build on These Many Efforts?

- Many quality influencers, and many providers across NDC types
- Multiple definitions of quality… commonalities and distinct purposes
- Multiple ways to promote quality… different mechanisms and potential synergies
- Challenge and opportunity of creating something new

Summary of Current NDC Quality Efforts

- Certificates have most variation in providers and influencers
- Certifications, licensure, and apprenticeships have systems for quality—though not without challenges or limits
- Cross cutting efforts for quality are limited by lack of data and challenges of definitions; many are emergent and evolving
- States are a locus of activity, but national efforts and institutional level efforts may be complementary

Questions to Guide Action to Build the NDC Quality System

- How can we create the **data infrastructure** to track NDCs including new data systems and connecting fragmented existing systems?
- What are opportunities to **link quality efforts**, or to focus on specific quality efforts?
- What role does **information, norm setting,** and **regulation** have in promoting NDC quality?
- How can we address **labor market failures**, including credentials that are not well known or not trusted, and low wage occupations?
- What can different **stakeholders** each do, including providers, influencers, and consumers (e.g. employers, individuals, and public)?

For More Information…

Contact Michelle Van Noy,
mvannoy@rutgers.edu

Visit the EERC Website:
http://smlr.rutgers.edu/eerc

Join our mailing list:

Questions and Discussion on Noncredit

- Where are you with noncredit data in your state and institution? (data systems? connected to credit? type of programs? outcomes?)
- What are 1-2 data issues you are working through?
- What noncredit data collection practices have worked well at your college?
- Do you have any recommendations for other colleges looking to improve their noncredit data collection?