


<b>Workforce Connections General Policies Credential/Certificate</b>	<b>GEN-050-03</b>
<b>Supersedes policy 3.13 dated 03-01-2008</b>	<b>Revision No. 2 Effective 03-24-2020</b>
<b>Policy Approved By: WC Executive Director Policy Adopted on: February 2014</b>	

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide additional guidance on established requirements for educational and occupational certificates/credentials.

**Background**

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)/Employment and Training Administration (ETA) recognizes that a more focused effort on credentialing can help lay the human capital foundation necessary to support new and growing industry sectors of the economy. For employers, credentials demonstrate and document skills that increase their ability to fill skilled positions, build talent pipelines and compete in today’s labor market. For workers and job seekers, credentials improve their labor market experience through higher earnings and job security. TEGL 15-10 establishes “credential” as the umbrella term encompassing postsecondary degrees, diplomas, licenses, certificates, and certifications that are awarded in recognition of an individual’s attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an occupation. TEGL 14-18 further outlines performance reporting requirements with respect to credential attainment.

In today’s increasingly competitive, dynamic, and fast-paced world economy, economic growth and broadly shared prosperity depends upon the education and skills of the American workforce, TEGL 15-10.

**Policy**

Consistent with USDOL/ETA requirements, Workforce Connections provides for priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations. Credential/certificate programs must lead to recognized post-secondary credentials, industry-recognized credentials, employment, and/or measurable skill gains necessary to obtain/retain employment or to advance within an industry/occupation.

**References**

29 U.S.C §3164; 29 U.S.C. §3174; Public Law (P.L.) 113-128 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Secs. 3, and 116; 20 CFR Part 680; 20 CFR Part 681; TEGL 15-10; TEGL 10-16 Change 1; TEGL 14-18; State Compliance Policy (SCP) 1.12

The US DOL provides definitions of, and criteria for, the types of diplomas and certificates that qualify as attained credentials. Only those credentials that meet the US DOL definition may be considered a positive attainment and thus used in calculating attainment of degree or certificate performance for the WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker and youth programs.

A qualifying credential is one that provides a client with the documentation of education and/or technical or occupational skills necessary to gain/retain employment or advance within an industry or occupation. These skills are measurable, based upon industry standards, and developed or endorsed by employers.

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## **I. Defining Credentials and Their Importance [TEGL 15-10]**

- A.** Within the context of workforce development generally, the term credential refers to an attestation of qualification or competence issued to an individual by a third party (such as an educational institution or an industry or occupational certifying organization) with the relevant authority or assumed competence to issue a credential.
- B.** **Recognized Postsecondary Credential – Sec. 3(52) of WIOA**  
The term “recognized postsecondary credential” means a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Graduate degrees are not included in the definition of a recognized postsecondary credential. Therefore, graduate degrees do not count towards credential attainment.

- C.** Examples of credentials/certificates may include:
1. Educational diplomas and certificates (typically for one academic year or less of study);
  2. Educational degrees, such as an associate’s (2-year) or bachelor’s (4-year) degree;
  3. Registered apprenticeship certificate;
  4. Occupational licenses (typically, but not always, awarded by State government agencies); and
  5. Industry-recognized or professional association certifications; also known as personnel certifications; and
  6. Other skill certificates for specific skill sets or competencies within one or more industries or occupations (e.g., writing, leadership).

## **II. Credential Attainment**

For the purpose of “Credential Attainment” WIOA distinguishes between a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, and postsecondary credentials.

- A.** A recognized-postsecondary credential is defined in TEGL 10-16 – Change 1, as a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree, as well as graduate degrees for purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation program as required by Sec. 103 (a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of WIOA.
- B.** A recognized postsecondary credential is awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of measurable technical or industry/occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an industry/occupation. These technical or industry/occupational skills generally are based on standards developed or endorsed by employers or industry associations. Neither certificates awarded by workforce development boards (WDBs), nor work readiness certificates, are included in this definition because neither type of certificate documents the measurable technical or industry/occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation. Likewise, such certificates must recognize technology or industry/occupational skills for the specific industry/occupation rather than general skills related to safety, hygiene, etc., even if such general skills certificates are broadly required to qualify for entry-level employment or advancement in employment.

**C. Only qualifying credentials will be counted in calculations of the attainment of degree/certificate performance measure.**

A variety of different public and private entities issue recognized postsecondary credentials. Below is a list of the types of organizations and institutions that award recognized postsecondary credentials. Please note that all credentials by these entities meet the definition of recognized postsecondary credential.

1. A State educational agency or State agency responsible for administering vocational and technical education within the State (e.g., Commission on Postsecondary Education (CPE)).
2. An institution of higher education described in Sec. 102 of the Higher Education Act. (20 USC 1002) that is qualified to participate in student financial assistance programs authorized by Title IV of that Act. This includes community colleges, proprietary schools, and all other institutions of higher education that are eligible to participate in Federal student financial aid programs (e.g., Nevada State College, College of Southern Nevada, Western Nevada College, Great Basin College, Truckee Meadows Community College).
3. A professional, industry or employer organization (e.g., National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence certification, or a National Institute for Metalworking Skills, Inc., Machining Level I credential) or a product manufacturer or developer (e.g., Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, Certified Novell Engineer, or a Sun Certified Java Programmer) using a valid and reliable assessment of an individual's knowledge, skills and abilities.
4. ETA's Office of Apprenticeship or a State registered apprenticeship program.
5. A public regulatory agency, upon an individual's fulfillment of educational, work experience, or skill requirements that are legally necessary for an individual to use an occupational or professional title or to practice an occupation or profession (e.g., Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mechanic license, or a State licensed asbestos inspector).
6. A program that has been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs to offer education benefits to veterans and other eligible persons.
7. Job Corps centers that issue certificates.
8. An institution of higher education which is formally controlled, or has been formally sanctioned or chartered, by the governing body of an Indian tribe or tribes.

### III. Targeted Credentials

The value of credential to employers, workers, and society at large cannot be overstated. For employers, credentials demonstrate and document skills, increasing their ability to fill skilled positions, build talent pipelines and compete. For worker and job seekers, credentials improve their labor market experience through higher earnings, greater mobility and enhance job security.

Four attributes of educational and workforce credentials that strengthen the value of credentials to individuals are industry-recognition, stackability, portability and accreditation.

- A. Industry Recognized:** Developed and offered by, or 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 vendors of certain products (e.g., Microsoft).
- B. Stackable:** 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 them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs (e.g., diploma or GED, or associate's bachelor's and master's degrees).
- C. Portable:** A credential is considered portable when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings - either in other geographic areas, at other educational institutions or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs.
- D. Accredited:** The goal of accreditation of educational programs is to ensure that the education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. The U.S. Department of Education maintains a website on "Accreditation in the United States" at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html> that provides lists of regional and national accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education or training offered by institutions of higher education or higher education programs they accredit.

### IV. General Provisions

- A.** Training is often only one component of the certificate performance measures. In most instances, successful completion of training is coupled with other requirements to receive a certificate. A training program completion certificate alone is not sufficient to demonstrate certificate attainment. Examples of certifications that meet the criteria outlined in this policy are included in item V of this policy.
- B.** All training services must be clearly identified and expectations for earning of a certificate must be indicated in the participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The participant must understand that, once training begins, he or she is expected to complete all required activities. Partial program completion does not meet the intent of Federal requirements and program staff must not report certificates if the participant failed to complete the entire program.

- C.** The following criteria will be used to define training services and other organized programs of study. All criteria must be met for the program to be considered certificate-eligible for all performance measures that evaluate certificate attainment.
1. The training course must have a clear structure and standardized mechanism of delivery.
  2. The training program accomplishes a specific set of occupational skill requirements with specific and measurable goals and objectives.
  3. The credential is recognized by employers and used in hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions.
  4. The credential/certificate holder has the required skills to be functional on the job on the first day of employment.
  5. The credential/certificate and skills are transferable from one employer to another within the industries that recognize the attained certificate/credential.
  6. The credential/certificate must be issued by one of the organizations listed in item II of this policy.
  7. The skills documented through the credential are currently in demand within the local labor market.
  8. If applicable to a specific occupation, the participant cannot secure a license to perform the skills acquired during the training program without successfully completing the training program and the license is required to secure and/or retain employment.
  9. Verifiable source from training provider or certifying agency that a credential/certificate is not awarded in the event the participant fails to successfully complete the training program.

**V. Credential/Certificate Examples**

- A.** Examples of acceptable certificates/credentials include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. A high school diploma, GED or other recognized equivalent [TEGL 15-10 credential resource guide – attachment 2];
  2. Post-secondary award, certificate or diploma (less than one (1) academic year) [TEGL 15-10 credential resource guide – attachment 2];
  3. Post-secondary award, certificate or diploma (at least one (1) but less than two (2) academic years [TEGL 15-10 credential resource guide – attachment 2];
  4. Recognized skill standards, licensure or industry-recognized certificates (e.g., car repair, CDL, CNA, Boiler operator, Heavy Equipment Operator, HVAC, etc.);
  5. All State education agency recognized credentials; and
  6. Registered apprenticeship certificates.

Please note that the credential resource guide published as TEGL 15-10, Attachment 2 was designed for use under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). There are six educational credentials/awards listed in that attachment that must no longer be applied toward credential attainment (with the exception of TAA). These six credentials/awards are:

- Post-baccalaureate certificate;
- Post-master's certificate;
- First-professional certificate (post-degree);
- Master's degree;
- First-professional degree; and
- Doctor's degree.

**B. Examples of certificates that do not count towards the attainment of a degree/certificate measure include, but are not limited to:**

1. Work readiness certificates;
2. Soft skills certificates;
3. A standard driver's license;
4. Certificates issued for attendance or participation;
5. OSHA;
6. CPR;
7. TAM card, sheriff card, health card, etc.

**VI. Secondary School Diploma**

**A.** For purposes of the credential attainment performance indicator, a secondary school diploma, or alternate diploma, commonly referred to as high school diploma is one that is recognized by a state and that is included for accountability purposes under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**B.** A secondary school equivalency certification signifies that a student has completed the requirements for a high school education. The types of recognized equivalents, for those not covered under ESEA, that would satisfy this performance indicator are those recognized by a state.

**C.** Examples of secondary school diplomas, alternate diplomas, and recognized equivalents recognized by individual states include:

1. Obtaining certification of attaining passing scores on a state-recognized high school equivalency test;
2. Earning a secondary school diploma or state-recognized equivalent through a credit bearing secondary education program sanctioned by state law, code, or regulation;
3. Obtaining certification of passing a state recognized competency-based assessment; or completion of a specified number of college credits.

**VII.** Data element validation and/or data cross match procedures require that the type of credential/certificate reported in individual participant records and counted toward Federal performance measures must be validated by reviewing acceptable source documentation and must become part of the program participant files. Ideally, all source documentation should tell the same story regarding the program participant, services provided, and outcomes. For example, copies of records from an educational institution are a more reliable source than participant self-attestation.

**VIII. Reporting Requirements**

Reporting of credential/certificate attainment is critical. Sub-recipients must ensure that training services received, and credentials attained are reported accurately and timely in the authorized MIS system.

**IX. Additional Guidance**

Training & Employment Guidance Letter - TEGL 15-10

[https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=2967](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2967)

Training & Employment Guidance Letter – TEGL 10-16 Change 1

[https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=3255](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=3255)

Training & Employment Guidance Letter – TEGL 14-18

[https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?docn=7611](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=7611)

Career One-Stop – Certification Finder<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-certifications.aspx>

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<sup>1</sup> The certification finder database is an online resource that may be helpful to workforce development entities and/or service providers. This information is provided as a resource only and does not constitute an endorsement of the certifications listed on the site.