



## POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

# Stackable Degrees and Credentials

*The purpose of this model policy is to establish a state cross-agency committee to create and monitor guidelines for public higher education institutions in the offering of programs and credentials that are stackable in the same industry and/or occupational area. This policy codifies a process to review, align and update identified stackable credentialed programs (degree and non-degree) across state postsecondary system(s) and sets expectations for systemwide and statewide data collection and reporting on promoted postsecondary stackable credentialed programs valued by industries.*

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- [College Articulation Agreements](#)
- [Industry Credentials](#)

## Stackable Degrees and Credentials Model Policy

### SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS

As used in this section, the terms have the following meanings:

- (1) “Credential” means a postsecondary awarded industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion, a license recognized by a state or federal agency/government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.
- (2) “Institution of higher education” means
  - (a) a public or private non-profit university or college, community college, local district college, or area technical college; or
  - (b) a postsecondary career and technical education program.
- (3) “Postsecondary” means all public higher education institutions and offered programs leading to bachelor’s degrees, associates degrees, industry-valued certificates and diplomas, or other sub-bachelors/sub-associates licenses and credentials.
- (4) “Stackable Credential” means a sequence of awarded credentials that are in the same occupational area that a learner can build upon to access an advanced job or higher wage and are part of offered postsecondary degree and/or non-degree programs. A stackable credential can reflect (but not be limited to):



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- (a) Vertical stacking, which involves the earning of one or more credentials that progress toward a higher-level credential
  - (b) Horizontal stacking, which involves the earning of various credentials in related fields that, when taken collectively, prepare the learner for a specific type of occupation
  - (c) Value-added stacking, which involves adding an area of expertise to an existing degree to enhance learner preparedness for a specific type of occupation
- (5) “(State) Committee on Stackable Credentials” means the cross-agency committee established under this act.

### SECTION 2. COMMITTEE ON STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

- (1) The (State) Committee on Stackable Credentials (the Committee) is hereby established and directed to provide leadership, assessment, and strategic direction for the state’s offered postsecondary programs in specific industry sectors and the stackability of the programs’ offered credentials toward career and/or salary advancement in the same industry and/or occupational area.
- (2) *(Customize membership for specific state agencies and the responsibilities of identified members.)* The Committee shall include representatives from the following state agencies. These representatives shall serve as standing, voting members of the Committee:
  - (a) Heads, or designees, of state agencies
  - (b) State agencies *(personalize agency names)*
    - (i) K-12 education
    - (ii) Higher education
    - (iii) Labor and workforce development, and
    - (iv) Economic and community development
  - (c) Representatives from other state-level agencies and/or regional-level entities may be appointed at the discretion of the Committee
- (3) The Committee shall be chaired by *(title, agency/entity)*.
- (4) The Committee shall meet biannually; however, the chair has discretion to call special meetings, if warranted. The Committee may also establish subcommittees, if warranted, in response to specific tasks or assignments of the Committee.
- (5) The Committee collectively, and each member within the bounds of her/his authority and influence, shall:
  - (a) Annually review all promoted postsecondary programs (degree and non-degree) responsive to industry sector needs to ensure programs are offered in a manner that affirms interconnection of the programs and awarded credentials with industry;



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- (b) Assess promoted programs and awarded credentials to ascertain the degree to which the credentials are complementary and stackable toward career and/or salary advancement in the same industry and/or occupational area;
- (c) Establish guidelines for public higher education institutions for programs and the awarding of credentials that are stackable in the same industry and/or occupational area. In establishing guidelines, the Committee shall:
  - (i) Set state expectations for the offering and awarding of stackable credentials
  - (ii) Affirm stackable credentials are available across the state's higher education institutions and are transferable
  - (iii) Affirm postsecondary programs incorporate learner exit and entry points in the earning of stackable credentials
  - (iv) Set program quality measures that evaluate offered postsecondary programs and awarded credentials
  - (v) Recognize relevant program costs and funding
- (6) Actively seek engagement and feedback from industry sector stakeholders in support of the decisions by the Committee; and
- (7) Annually report on the state's offered postsecondary programs and the stackability of the programs' offered credentials toward career and/or salary advancement in the same industry and/or occupational area.

### SECTION 3. EVALUATION

- (1) The Committee shall annually review program quality data to evaluate the state's postsecondary programs and identified stackable credentials.
- (2) Program quality measures and data shall include, but not be limited to:
  - (a) Student participation by
    - (i) Demographic (race, gender, family income, disability, home language, etc.),
    - (ii) Higher education institution
    - (iii) Program enrollment and completion
    - (iv) Earned credential(s)
  - (b) Program transfer and program completion;
  - (c) Awarded credentials reflective of promoted sequence; and
  - (d) Occupation and/or employment indicators.



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- (3) Based on the data review, the Committee shall formulate and publish recommendations to further strengthen the process. Each recommendation shall incorporate high-level action steps and deadline(s) for completion.
- (4) All state agencies serving on the Committee shall support and comply with program quality measures and will collect and provide data to inform the annual review and reporting process.
  - (a) Where needed, cross-agency, data-sharing agreements shall be instituted; and
  - (b) Cross-agency data sharing shall be transparent.

### SECTION 4. REPORT

By (*date*) of each year, the Committee shall report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, on the state's offered postsecondary programs and the stackability of the programs' offered credentials toward career and/or salary advancement in the same industry. The report shall incorporate yearly results from all identified program quality measures and completion status on previous year's recommendations.

### SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

