# National Report Provides Strategies for States to Identify and Promote Credentials of Value

**Washington, D.C. (October 2, 2018) —** The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Education Strategy Group (ESG), and Advance CTE today released a series of recommendations to support states as they work to increase student attainment of industry-recognized credentials that have value in the workforce and higher education.

Postsecondary credentials provide a critical gateway to economic prosperity for students, and the universe of options has expanded beyond traditional bachelor degrees to include associate degrees, professional licenses, and certificates. With over 4,000 credentialing bodies nationwide offering thousands of industry-recognized credentials, identifying which of those has value—and prioritizing attainment of those credentials—is critical as states work to support students in a shifting economy.

"Across the country, states are taking the initiative to increase the number of kids who are prepared for success in both collegeand a career,” said Carissa Moffat Miller, executive director of CCSSO. “Every child should have access to a high-quality education that provides pathways into college and a career and because those pathways often require postsecondary credentials, it is critically important that we support states in their efforts to ensure that they are meaningful, and that all students are provided equitable access to attaining them."

“States have taken a huge step forward by recognizing that a high school diploma isn’t enough to open the door to meaningful career opportunities for students,” said Matt Gandal, president of Education Strategy Group. “But there are thousands of industry credentials available in this country and few mechanisms for deciphering which ones are valuable. States must ensure that they are incentivizing credentials that are truly valued by employers, otherwise they could be leading students down paths that close off their long-term economic opportunities.”

Earning a credential of value can open doors to economic opportunity for students. While bachelor’s degrees continue to be strong currency in the labor market, there are over 30 million good jobs nationwide that are held by those with sub-baccalaureate credentials. In this economic environment, students and their families need clearer information about the credentialing demands of employers, including which can improve students’ job opportunities and wage potential.

[*Credential Currency: How States Can Identify and Promote Credentials of Value*](https://ccsso.org/resource-library/credential-currency-how-states-can-identify-and-promote-credentials-value) introduces a roadmap for states to ensure that students pursue and attain industry-recognized credentials with real value in the marketplace. From creating a priority list of credentials to helping significantly more students earn those credentials, *Credential Currency* covers common barriers, recommended strategies, and opportunities to further advance the work.

The report specifically recommends that states focus on three priorities:

1. **Identifying high-value credentials.** Employers must serve as a lighthouse as states work to identify which credentials have value. States can harness employer signals in job postings, hiring decisions, and employee pay. And they can prioritize credentials that count for or stack to postsecondary credit.
2. **Incentivizing attainment of high-value credentials.** States can and should catalyze high-value credential attainment through a robust set of incentives. That includes demonstrating the impact credentials have on students’ futures, promoting school and district prioritization of high-value credentials through funding and accountability policies, and communicating publicly the importance of specific credentials; and
3. **Collecting and reporting credential attainment data.** States can set forth new expectations for data collection and quality that bypass self-reported information to more reliably report industry-recognized credential attainment.

*Credential Currency* is part of the larger New Skills for Youth initiative, supported by J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. to help states strengthen and expand their career preparation systems. The report is an outgrowth of that work—recognizing that high-quality credentials are foundational for career pathways that lead to economic opportunity.

“Without the right skills and meaningful postsecondary credentials, many young people entering the labor market find themselves stuck in low-skill, low-wage jobs or, worse, unemployed and out of school,” said Jennie Sparandara, head of workforce initiatives, JPMorgan Chase. “This report provides a much-needed road map for states to work with their employer community to invest in high quality pathways anchored in credentials that open doors to economic and career success.”

The recommendations in *Credential Currency* are derived from the Career Readiness Expert Workgroup (CREW). Facilitated by ESG, CCSSO, and Advance CTE, the CREW worked to identify best practices that states can adopt to support students in attaining industry credentials that connect to continuing education and good jobs. CREW members included leaders from state education agencies, business and industry associations, philanthropy, and policy and research organizations.

*Credential Currency* also aims to assist states in their efforts to increase equity in education. By prioritizing only those credentials that connect students to high-skill, high-demand, high-wage jobs or accelerate their progress through postsecondary education—and expanding access to those credentials for all students—states can ensure that all students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for success after high school.

“Prioritizing high-quality credentials is a matter of equity. We must ensure that the credentials earned in K-12 set up students--especially those from special populations--for meaningful postsecondary and career opportunities. We are heartened to see state leaders work to identify quality credentials, close equity gaps and open paths to economic success for students,” said Kim Green, executive director of Advance CTE.

States are poised to move the needle on credential attainment. Forty-one states have set postsecondary attainment goals aligned to future workforce projections. And K-12 has made credential attainment a focus, with over half the states building new metrics into their high school accountability systems to encourage students to earn industry-recognized credentials.

Much work remains to support states navigating toward a coherent list of priority credentials. While states are at different stages in their efforts to identify high-value credentials and incentivize and monitor attainment, all states can use this report to move their credentialing work forward and ensure that all students are ready for college, career, and life.

For more information, download *Credential Currency: How States Can Identify and Promote Credentials of Value* at <https://ccsso.org/resource-library/credential-currency-how-states-can-identify-and-promote-credentials-value>.

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**About CCSSO**

*The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.*

**About Education Strategy Group**

*Education Strategy Group supports America’s education leaders and employers at the transition points that have the highest stakes for students and the highest impact for states, communities and economies. We bring deep experience leading policy development, advocacy and implementation work in the K-12, higher education, and workforce sectors.*

**About Advance CTE**

*Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work is the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State Directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories.  Advance CTE was formerly known as the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc).*

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