



WORKFORCE READINESS

Industry-Valued Credentials

Ensure all industry credentials earned in K–12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.



Colorado

In 2018, the state passed HB 18-1266, which established the Career Development Incentive Program. It provides financial incentives for school districts and charter schools that encourage high school students, grades 9–12, to complete qualified industry credential programs, internships, residencies, construction preapprenticeship or construction apprenticeship programs, or qualified Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Participating districts or charter schools can receive up to \$1,000 for each completed credential. The specific dollar amount of each incentive depends on the total number of completed programs in the state and the number and type of completed programs reported by districts. The funding is distributed in tiers with industry credentials funded before all other qualified programs. The three Career Development Incentive Program tiers are:

- Industry certification programs;
- Internships, residencies, construction industry preapprenticeships or construction industry apprenticeships; and
- Computer science AP courses.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

According to ExcelinEd's research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2017–18, just 32 percent of industry credentials earned by Colorado K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least \$15 per hour. Colorado can raise the bar for its credential offerings in tandem with efforts to strengthen its CTE programs of study, which should include critical opportunities for credential attainment.

RESOURCES

- [Career Development Incentive Program](#)
- [Credentials Matter Colorado State Summary](#)

POLICIES

N/A



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Florida

In 2007, Florida's Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act created a partnership between the business and education communities, working together to provide rigorous courses that lead to industry certifications. To be included as a CAPE Industry Certification on the state's Industry Certification Funding List, a certification must first be on the list of CareerSource Florida Recommendations. CareerSource Florida, Inc. is the state's principal workforce policy organization, which is charged with creating an "employment, education, and training policy that ensures that programs to prepare workers are responsive to present and future business and industry needs."

The State Board of Education's rule on CAPE Postsecondary Industry Certification requires that a three-year strategic plan be developed jointly by the local school district, local workforce development boards, economic development agencies and state-approved postsecondary institutions. The strategic plan must be based on research regarding local and regional workforce needs and specify strategies to develop and implement career academies or career-aligned courses that are based on high-demand, high-skill and high-wage career pathways. The commissioner of education in Florida is responsible for conducting annual reviews to ensure alignment between existing course offerings and employer demand, postsecondary degree or certificate programs, and professional industry certifications. The focus of these reviews is occupations that are high demand and require high-level skills.

Florida provides weighted funding for students earning industry credentials. The amount of the full-time equivalent weight depends on the type of credential and amount of college credits it articulates for.

The state has recently created Get There Florida—a website that provides information on Florida colleges and the 17 career pathways, as well as information on education and workforce resources. It provides tools and information to help students earn "valuable, in-demand credentials that can be stacked."

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

According to ExcelinEd's research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2018–19, only 24 percent of credentials earned by Florida K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least \$15 per hour. Florida can take a more rigorous approach to evaluating which credentials are actually aligned with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations.

Additionally, the funding incentive has resulted in some school districts prioritizing CTE programs that result in credentials when credentials are not evenly available across CTE programs. Florida can consider how to ensure that districts include CTE programs without weighted credentials and prioritize offering three CTE courses in a complete program of study.

RESOURCES

- [Get There Florida](#)
- [Department of Education Industry Certification](#)
- [CAPE—Secondary](#)
- [2020–21 CAPE Industry Certification Funding List](#)

POLICIES

- [FL Statutes 1003.491](#). CAPE Act
- [FL Administrative Code Rule 6A-6.0573](#). Industry Certification Process
- [FL Statutes 1008.44](#). CAPE Industry Certification Funding List and CAPE Postsecondary Industry Certification Funding List
- [FL Department of Education Rule 6A-6.0574](#). CAPE Postsecondary Industry Certification Funding List
- [FL Statutes 445.004](#). CareerSource Florida, Inc.



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Kentucky

Under state statute (158.6455), the state establishes the process used to determine which industry certifications are recognized for K–12 learners in Kentucky. To be considered “industry recognized,” certifications must go through a verification process. The Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) works with each local workforce investment board to give job and demand data for the region. Local workforce investment boards work with local economic development organizations and business to compile a list of industry-recognized certifications, licensures and credentials, ranked by demand for that region. The lists are then given to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB). KWIB and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDOE) edit and refine the list before it is disseminated to all school districts.

Statute requires that KDOE shall pay for the cost of an assessment taken by a high school student for attaining an industry-recognized certification, credential or licensure if the student consecutively completes at least two related career pathway courses approved by the department prior to taking the assessment. Additionally, incentives for industry certification attainment exist within the state’s K–12 assessment and accountability system, with even greater weight being given to industry certifications earned in the state’s high-demand fields (these certifications earn a school/district a weight of 1.25, as opposed to a 1.0 in their accountability ratings).

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

According to ExcelinEd’s research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2017–18, just 19 percent of industry credentials earned by Kentucky K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least \$15 per hour. Kentucky can continue engaging with workforce to strengthen the alignment of earned industry credentials with employer demand.

RESOURCES

- [Credentials Matter Kentucky State Summary](#)

POLICIES

- [KRS § 158.6455](#). Industry Certification Process