



POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

Stackable Degrees and Credentials

Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.



Indiana

Indiana established its Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant, which provides free job training in one of Indiana's five high-demand job fields. These include Advanced Manufacturing, Building and Construction, Health and Life Sciences, IT and Business Services, and Transportation and Logistics. Within each field, the state has identified a set of certifications—most stackable—that can be earned by Indiana residents at no cost to them. The state's Workforce Ready Grant pays for all tuition and regularly assessed fees for qualifying high-value certificates at any eligible training provider.

At the system level, Indiana's Next Level Programs of Study outline the articulation of high school CTE pathways to postsecondary credential programs. These new programs of study are linked to at least one-year certificate programs at the state's two community/technical colleges. The majority of them were backward mapped from associate degree program levels.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Indiana has made impressive strides in developing clear frameworks for stackable credentialing at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels. To ensure strong implementation of these frameworks, the state should consider developing a process by which postsecondary institutions demonstrate that these credentials are actually “stacking” into credit bearing programs for learners. This could be a combination of both strong data collection/reporting and incentives for learner progression through stacked credentials.

RESOURCES

- [Next Level Jobs](#)
- [Next Level Programs of Study](#)
- [List of Credentials/Certifications by Job Field](#)

POLICIES

N/A



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Kentucky

Under state statute (164.580), the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) is directed to facilitate transfers of credit between certificate, diploma, technical and associate degree programs. To fulfill this, KCTCS has broken down technical degree programs into modules that articulate toward certificates and degrees. The system also promotes an information awareness campaign on how credentials and credit can be stacked, leading to more advanced credentials. The KnowHow2Transfer program also highlights how students can progress in their credential attainment from the KCTCS to a Kentucky four-year institution.

Additionally, state statute (164.092) notes that “building a stronger economy can be achieved by [Kentucky’s] public college and university system focusing its efforts and resources on the goals of: Increasing the retention and progression of students toward timely credential or degree completion; Increasing the number and types of credentials and degrees earned by all types of student; Facilitating credit hour accumulation and transfer of students from KCTCS to four (4) year postsecondary institutions.”

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

The state can facilitate partnerships between the education and business sectors (such as a workforce council) to identify opportunities through which students can see how these credentials play out in the workforce and businesses can identify potential employees, similar to Idaho’s SkillStack. The state can also provide additional funding to implement and promote stackable credentials.

RESOURCES

- [KCTCS Credit and Credential Policy and Approach](#)
- [KnowHow2Transfer Program](#)

POLICIES

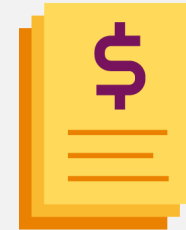
- [KRS § 164.580](#). KCTCS Degree Programs
- [KRS § 164.092](#). Higher Education Credential Progression



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Massachusetts

Through statute, Massachusetts requires stackable credentials to be available throughout the state. To ensure the stackable credentials are high quality, the state requires that the programs are based on industry needs and regional labor market data and implemented to ensure that the credentials are connected to competencies offered in specialized training programs. These credentials must also be transferable for college credit. In 2014, HB 4377 provided funding to implement and promote stackable credential programs.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Massachusetts can rigorously evaluate those credentials that many believe are stackable (e.g., certified nurse's assistant) but more often lead to dead ends for learners. This will mean raising the bar for many high school-level programs of study and ensuring that every pathway includes a corresponding postsecondary program aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. As it continues its development of stackable credentials, the state can consider how it can provide broad access to training and credential attainment—including incentives or scholarships for the Bay State's underserved populations.

RESOURCES

- [Massachusetts Perkins V State Plan](#)

POLICIES

- [MA General Laws Chapter 15A. Section 15G](#). Stackable Credentials
- [HB 4377](#). Promoting Economic Growth