**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Credentials: What They Are, Where To Find Them, And What Counts For Performance**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, I'm going to get myself right out of the way. I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar, "Credentials: What They Are, Where To Find Them, And What Counts For Performance."

And I'm going to ask, if you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself in that chat. And with that, I'm going to turn things over to today's moderator, Christina Eckenroth. She's a workforce analyst with the Office of Policy Development and Research. Christina, take it away.

CHRISTINA ECKENROTH: Thanks, Laura. So welcome, everybody, to today's webinar about credentials, what they are, where to find them, and what counts for performance.

So we will be covering a lot of ground today, addressing the basic framework of credentials under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, addressing guidance, talking about how various approaches to credentialing help workforce development participants, try to think about various aspects of credentials, and the intersection of credentials and WIOA performance accountability.

So just a few reminders, again, before we get started. We do invite you to put your questions and comments into the chat. As Laura said, we are going to try to get to as many questions as we can today, but we are sort of really packed with information. So if we don't get to your question, please reach out to us at ETAPerforms@dol.gov. And that e-mail is at the end of the presentation as a reminder. You don't have to memorize it.

And as Laura indicated, please fill out the survey. So hang on with us a few moments after today's event if you want to give us some immediate feedback about how it went. We do want to hear from you. Let us know what you like and how we can improve because we really do rely on these surveys to support the need for technical assistance events like this one and to plan for future events. So we do appreciate your feedback. Again, if you like these, please let us know.

Today's event features Pam Frugoli and Greg Scheib from the Office of Workforce Investment, and they're going to talk about what we mean by credentials and how to use them to support participants' career development.

And Kellen Grode from the Office of Policy Development and Research will discuss credentials from the WIOA performance accountability perspective. That means, what's the definition of them? What is recorded for WIOA? What's counted in WIOA?

Well, let's get started with an understanding of what we'll be talking about in terms of the universe of credentials and what we mean by credentials under WIOA.

So what are credentials? Well, there are a lot of credentials out there in the universe and that word is used a lot but not all of them are going to count for program reporting as credentials under WIOA. So credentials for reporting purposes under WIOA have to meet a very specific set of criteria, which we'll touch on.

If a credential does not meet the very specific set of parameters for performance reporting under WIOA, that doesn't mean that the credential is not valuable or that obtaining it cannot be part of an individual service strategy. It might still be an allowable service under an ETA workforce program. So you still might be able to help a participant reach that goal through career services, even if that is not something that the program can count as a credential in performance reporting.

So how do you start to sort through all of this? We understand that it can be a bit challenging to navigate the whole universe of credential, what that term is? What does ETA mean by it? What do you report? So ETA does have a lot of guidance, and we have some tools for the system around credentials that are going to help to orient you a little bit.

So in the next section, Greg Scheib is going to go over the available guidance about credentials. Greg, what do folks need to know?

GREG SCHEIB: Thanks, Christina, and hello, everyone. It's nice to be with you all today. We're going to go ahead and talk a little bit about some of the more recent guidance we've put out on credentials over the last couple of years.

There's three primary documents the department has released recently, TEGL 10-16, and there's a Change 1 to that which provides guidance on the requirements set forth in WIOA related to the implementation and the operation of the performance accountability system with ETA grants.

There's also TEGL 14-18, which aligns and streamlines performance indicators and requirements across 15 Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration programs and aligns them with WIOA performance indicators. It also supersedes some of the outdated credential guidance that we have given out from prior years.

And finally, the last piece of guidance that we put out was TEN 25-19, which is a supplement to the two documents I just mentioned, and it provides information understanding the key elements of credentials and identifying credentials for quality in-demand occupations.

Taking a closer look at TEGL 1016, Section 116 of WIOA establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system's six core programs that are defined in the WIOA legislation.

TEGL 14-18 addresses performance reporting for DOL programs that are not core programs, including DOL discretionary grants. The TEGL is also applicable to the various DOL programs. The TEGL is applicable to the various DOL programs that you see here on the screen.

The guidance is currently being updated and will soon include the Office of Apprenticeship Grants, and that update will likely be out later or towards the end of this year.

In 2020, the last piece of guidance we released TEN 25-19. The TEN compliments TEGL 10-16 and TEGL 14-18, and it provides up-to-date information on various types of credentials, the attributes of high-quality credentials, and the ways that the public workforce system can expand the use of credentials to meet the workforce needs across the country.

The TEN is available in the file share here that you have below, if you want to download any of that or you haven't had a chance to look at it already.

Just talking about the role of the public workforce system, obviously, it has a vital role in developing a skilled workforce that meets the needs of business. And credentials, of course, play an important role in that endeavor.

Credentials support workforce talent on both the business side and the career seeker side. For businesses, credentials can assist in identifying qualified workers, upskilling their current workforce, and helping them better compete in the marketplace. For jobseekers, credentials can document the skills and competencies they bring to an employer.

And research has shown that credentials lead to higher earnings, greater advancement opportunities, and enhanced job security. Additionally, credentials can typically be earned in as little as six months to two years and offer alternatives to more lengthy and costly undergraduate degrees.

Career pathways help jobseekers and workforce organizations think about employment in terms of careers and advancement, not just as a single job, and credentials, again, play a key component in developing a strong career pathway.

Some key features of strong career pathways include strong partnerships with business of all sizes in the identification of skills gaps and the development of high-quality training programs, coordination with other public agencies, educational institutions, economic development organizations, and others to effectively leverage public workforce resources and a thorough analysis of labor market information on industry staffing patterns, in-demand occupations, and training credentials that can provide workers with greater employability.

A well-designed career pathway leads to the attainment of stackable and portable credentials that are recognized by businesses and are used in hiring decisions. Good information and resources on career pathways is found on WorkforceGPS, the same place you signed up for this webinar at the link here on the slide. But we also have that in the resource guide that you can download in the file share as well.

We're going to cover this more in depth later in the presentation, but just a word on credentials as it relates to grant credential attainment performance outcomes. There is no comprehensive national list of approved credentials. However, there are numerous tools and resources for identifying available credentials, indicators of quality, and local demand that we will be sharing with you later in the presentation.

At this point, I'm going to take a little break and see if anybody has any questions in the chat. Christina, you want to take it from here?

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Greg. So if you have a question about anything we've talked about in this section, any guidance for what we'll be talking about today, drop that in the chat, and we will answer those questions.

And in the chat, I'm seeing some questions really about looking for a list of approved guidance. And I hope you heard what Greg was just able to share is we really don't have a specific list, but we do have some tools that can help you, some parameters and frameworks and some tools that can help folks determine what a credential for the purposes of WIOA and WIOA reporting might be.

And we -- yeah. We have a question about do we have a list of credentials that DOL recognizes? Do we have unacceptable credentials? So I'll pause here and let other folks weigh in, but we don't generate a list. But to your point, we do have a couple of items that we have used as examples that don't count and the rationale for that.

KELLEN GRODE: Yeah. This is Kellen. I would just chime in and say, I think, especially with regard to these types of questions, we're going to get into some of this in greater detail as well as we go through the rest of the presentation. So we've got some more information upcoming about what are allowable, how do you determine that, that sort of thing.

MS. ECKENROTH: Great, Kellen. So I think based on the feedback in the chat, we are ready to move on to the next section. Greg.

MR. SCHEIB: Sure. Ready to go. Thank you. And I'm going on. I will -- at this point, what I'd like to do is we're going to talk a little bit more in depth about credential types and characteristics. And as Christine and Kellen mentioned, some of the answers that you've posted in the chat I think should be addressed in this section.

There are many different types of credentials offered or awarded by various types of organizations. And within each category, there are many -- there may be thousands of individual credentials available within the marketplace. So it's important to understand key attributes of credentials to compare, evaluate, and make decisions about the right credentials to meet the business and jobseeker demands in your area.

Our next section is going to provide an overview of the various types of credentials and their most significant characteristics, including industry recognition, portability, stackability, and accreditation.

So let's start out with how we're defining credentials. Section 3 of WIOA defines recognized postsecondary credentials 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 -- excuse me -- a license recognized by the state involved or the federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Recognized postsecondary credentials are awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of measurable technical or industry occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an industry or occupation. These technical or industry or occupational skills generally are based on standards developed or endorsed by businesses or industry associations.

Certificates awarded by local workforce development boards are not included in this definition, nor are work readiness certificates because neither type of certificate is recognized industry wide, nor do they document measurable technical or industry skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation.

Recognized postsecondary credentials reflect technical or industry skills or occupational skills for the specific industry or occupation, rather than the general skills related to work readiness, safety, or hygiene, for example.

Recognized postsecondary credentials are an attestation of qualification or competence issued by an individual, by a third party, such as an educational institution or an industry or occupational certifying organization with the relevant authority or expertise to issue such a credential. And some of the terms that are obviously used these days, diploma, certificate, and degree are often used in that context.

Credentials can be broadly grouped into categories that you see here. However, new types and terminologies are often used. More recent examples include terms such as micro-credentials and badges, and you may be hearing about some of those terms being used more recently.

Characteristics that strengthen the value of credentials to individuals and businesses include being industry recognized, being stackable, being portable, and being accredited. We're now going to talk a little bit about each of those.

In terms of industry-recognized, an industry-recognized credential is either one developed and offered by or endorsed by a nationally or regionally-recognized industry association or organization representing a sizable portion of the industry sector, or, two, a credential that is sought or accepted by companies within the industry sector for purposes of hiring or recruitment, which might include credentials from vendors of certain products.

In some industry sectors, there may be more than one major industry association, and these groups may endorse or promote different credentials. Credentials that are sought by individual companies within the industry may also vary by geographic region, by company size, or the specific product or equipment the company uses.

Consequently, there may not be a single, readily identifiable national credential for all industry sectors or occupations. For example, there are hundreds of certifications that exist within the information technology industry. There are multiple industry associations, and there are multiple product vendors that offer occupational certifications.

The workforce system operating in a local area needs to work with businesses to determine what credentials are in demand by local businesses. However, industry-recognized credentials must be occupationally specific to ensure they recognize technical or occupational skills rather than general skills for any occupation or industry.

A credential is considered stackable when it's 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 a career ladder to different and potentially higher paying jobs.

For example, an individual can stack a high school diploma, an associate's degree, and then typically take two more years of appropriate postsecondary education to attain a bachelor's degree. An individual could also stack a certificate within an apprenticeship and later earn a degree or an advanced certification.

Recently, some postsecondary institutions are now embedding certifications into their two- and four-year degree programs, providing academic credit for the certifications leading towards degree completion.

A credential is considered portable when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings, such as other geographic areas across the country, other educational institutions, or other industries or businesses. For example, registered apprenticeship program certificates of completion are considered to be nationally and in some cases internationally portable.

It's important to note that occupational licenses are typically issued by states. So there are often issues with portability, although there are some interstate compacts for certain licensed occupations, as well as special provision for military spouses in licensed occupations, if they are a subgroup of the U.S. workforce that moves the most frequently.

Even so, the lack of portability should not eliminate a credential from consideration, since many licensed occupations, particularly in health care, are in high demand.

Accreditation by an independent quality review body is a valuable attribute and is often required for educational institutions or for specific educational programs in order for students to be eligible for federal financial aid. The goal of educational program accreditation 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, which 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 the institutions of higher education or the programs that they accredit.

Accredited educational institutions may offer both for credit and not-for-credit programs. Generally, institutions are accredited as a whole. However, some specialized programs require a separate program accreditation in addition to being offered by an accredited educational institution. Accreditation also exists in the realm of occupational certification, but it is less common.

There are two main organizations that accredit such certifications. These accrediting organizations referred to those as personnel certifications or certificates since they are awarded to people rather than to products or equipment, which can also be certified.

Certificates and certifications can be accredited by a variety of accrediting organizations, such as the American National Standards Institute, which provides accreditation of personnel certifications and certificates. ANSI maintains a directory of accredited personnel certification bodies, applicants, and suspended certification bodies online. ANSI also maintains a directory of accredited certificate issuers, applicants, and suspended issues.

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence at the National Commission for Certifying Agencies provides accreditation of personnel certifications and certificates and maintains a listing of accredited certification programs.

It's important to note that some valuable credentials, as Christina mentioned earlier, offered by industry and professional associations or by product vendors may not be accredited. So it's important to look for other markers of quality or value in the labor market, such as industry-wide recognition, professional association acceptance, or local demand.

The slide here simply provides some of the links to some of the organizations that I just mentioned, and if you download the PowerPoint, you can access those. They should also be on the credential resource document that you can download here.

So at this point, I think I'm going to turn it over to you, Pam, to talk about identifying relevant credentials.

PAM FRUGOLI: Okay. Thank you, Greg. So let's turn to where do we find the information to identify credentials and their various characteristics to see if they meet our criteria.

So workforce organizations will need to consider state and local economic conditions, state and local employer need, and the skills gaps in their local workforce or in their -- in the clients who come into the local American jobs center and things like that. And so, some state and local boards actually establish their own criteria based on the research they've done with local employers.

While some credentials are valuable in almost all areas and have national demand, it's still important to look at local job postings data and consult with local employers to validate specific needs in your area. And we want to site earlier webinar we had the state of Alabama spoke about the process that they are using to identify credentials. And we've provided a link to a video that they've produced in the resources tab of this webinar, and in that -- the resources in attachment number twp. And Alabama is just one of the states that is making that kind of effort.

So there a lot of questions to ask, a number of questions to ask, and we'll later talk about tools that help you ask the questions. But, first, you would say, what type of credential is this? Is this a degree or license or a certificate? What type of organization is offering the credential? Is it an educational institution? And if so, is that institution accredited?

And is the training provider offering the credential included on the WIOA eligible training provider list? And is the credential valued by industry? So we would ask if it's endorsed by an industry or professional association or do employers prefer to hire individuals who have earned the credential?

Here are some additional considerations. Is there evidence available that the credential leads to positive employment outcomes and earnings? And Kellen will talk later about a resource site where we're starting to collect that data that's being collected under WIOA. And states are also collecting this data and should be looking at it and analyzing it to identify credentials that lead to positive employment outcomes in their area.

And then is the credential portable to other employers or other geographic areas? And we do want to note here, and I think Greg has already mentioned it, but that state occupational licenses often are not portable to other states. However, they still have very, very high value because a license is required to obtain employment in a licensed occupation. So you have to have it to work in that state.

And in addition, there are a number of occupations that have interstate licensing contacts, such as for registered nurses. So certain licenses can also be portable as well. And you can find information on the portability of licenses by searching for interstate licensing compacts.

Then this question relates to what we've been saying before. Does the credential result in occupational or technical skills that prepare for entry into or advancement in an occupation? So you can use WIOA funds to provide training for credentials that attest to general skills, such as work readiness, hygiene, or safety. You can use funds, but they don't -- they only count toward credential attainment measure if they actually prepare a person for a specific occupation.

So the example we like to use here is there is a handwashing certificate and sometimes it's required that people who work in food handling or in health care have the handwashing certificate. But there's no job where all you do all day is wash your hands. So therefore, it does not prepare you for an occupation, and it does not count for credential attainment. But you may actually want to help someone get that certificate as part of their overall training.

Then another consideration is, is the credential cost-effective? What's the cost versus what occupation it helps them attain? And what are the wages in that occupation? Is it readily available? And what's the time frame to complete it?

So we do have a number of tools to help you look up credentials and find out their characteristics. And Credential Engine is a group that has done research on credentials, and they've identified that there are hundreds of thousands of credentials out there. The thing is they're counting things such as a diploma from each high school or an English baccalaureate degree from every different university. But, nevertheless, there are still thousands of different types.

So we will highlight some different resources to learn about these various types, and many of these are on a DOL sponsored website called Career One-Stop. You can see here that we have several sites which I will talk about individually.

So there's a local training finder, which has -- it's based, actually, on the integrated postsecondary education data system from the Department of Education. So it has programs that are eligible for Title IV funding from every state in the country, and you can search this tool by occupation title, by school name, by program name, and just by keyword search. And it'll -- and then it also has links inside it so that you can go learn more about the program or the institution that it's offered at. So it's a good overall resource for finding training programs.

Then Career One-Stop also has a site just for certification, because these are often quite different and you can't really find them in educational resources. They're often offered by industry or professional associations. And this site contains more than 5,000 such certifications. Again, it's also searchable by keyword or by occupation. But, in addition, we've tried to really add some information here so that you can find out more than just the title of the certification.

So there's a number of icons that are shown by various certifications. So there are two different organizations that accredit certifications, ANSI and NCCA. And so, if it's accredited by ANSI, there will be an A by the certification, or, again, for the other type of accreditation, I means it is recognized formally by an industry association or endorsed. However, we do know that local employers might also demand certain credentials and that also counts.

And then there's a little chili pepper that indicates that this certification is actually mentioned in the national job postings. Now, this is the kind of thing that can also then be customized. Career One-Stop is a nationwide tool. So we've done those icons nationally. But you might also want to look at demand in your state or local area for certain certifications, but this gives you an overall picture.

Then there's another site for occupational licenses, the license finder in Career One-Stop. So these are credentials that are awarded by a government agency, typically a state licensing board, but this site also includes federal licenses, such as some of the Federal Aviation Administration. And again, licenses are important because they're required to practice the occupation in that jurisdiction.

A license can also require other credentials; right, such as a degree or a certificate or a certification exam and things like that. But all of these sites, it doesn't just provide you the title, and it'll also tell you what state they're in. You can search -- narrow your search by state, but it provides links to get you to the website of the licensing agency so that you can find out what the requirements are.

This site, Credentials Matter, is not a DOL-sponsored site. I think it's actually from a state consortium, but they have assembled information on career and technical education credentials. It's sort of focused at that area of secondary to postsecondary transition and dual credit programs, but it can also be very useful for workforce.

And again, it has both national trends and then sharing of state-level information about the credentials students earn, the credentials employers demand for these select states that are participating. But I believe additional states can join and expand out. So we wanted to provide this site as a resource also.

And finally, I mentioned Credential Engine a little bit earlier. They're a group that is trying to get more information about credentials out and available. And so, they are providing technical standards for sharing information, but they've also been building a sample credential finder to display what that kind of information should be.

So for example, organizations that offer credentials make their data available and it goes into a credential registry and then it can be used in Credential Finder but it could also be used in other ways. A state could pull information from the registry into their own sites for relevant credentials.

And one of the real advantages of this is that it tells you what skills are associated with credentials or what competencies so that, often, all you know is the name -- right -- of the credential and then you're like, well, what does that include? So things that are entered into this registry and Credential Finder tool will also be able to say, it teaches these competencies.

And that can be very helpful when you're trying to compare between different credentials to identify which one will be most helpful in meeting local employer need and get -- and making -- and helping individuals have the skills and competencies so that they're employable.

And now, I'm going to turn it over to Kellen because he's the one who knows the most about this particular site. Take it away, Kellen.

MR. GRODE: Thanks, Pam. Yeah. So the last of this section that we wanted to talk about is a new site that we recently launched last December called TrainingProviderResults.gov. Basically, what this site is is a searchable list of training providers that are eligible under WIOA to provide training.

It's based on the reports that are submitted to the department by states detailing the eligible training outcomes, mostly focused on WIOA but not not necessarily exclusively, because we do have some programs here at DOL that are authorized under different statutes but that follow similar rules.

So we're going to start by talking about and reminding folks, again, of this definition that you'll recognize from earlier in the session; right, which is our -- the WIOA definition of a recognized postsecondary credential, which, again, is a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of the completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the state involved or federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

And Greg touched a lot on sort of what this definition means. So I don't want to go repeat too much, but I think one of the important points that we like to remind folks of is that, when we're talking about these recognized postsecondary credentials, they're awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of a measurable technical or industry occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an industry or occupation.

From the performance standpoint, we talk about this in our Training Employment Guidance Letter 10-16, Change 1, which is one of the pieces of guidance Greg discussed earlier.

But in terms of these technical industry occupational skills, they're based on standards developed endorsed -- and endorsed by businesses or industry associations. And so, to the point that we've talked about some already today, certificates that are awarded by local boards that are not included in the definition or work readiness certificates, these types of things are often not meeting this definition because they are not recognized industrywide or they don't document the measurable technical or industry occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance with an occupation.

These recognized postsecondary credentials, they do reflect these technical or industry occupational skills for the specific industry rather than general skills related to things like safety and hygiene. Again, these are things that we've kind of talked about a bit already, but it's something that comes up a lot. So we like to emphasize it. And so, I think the point here, though, is that, even if such general skills certificates are broadly required for -- to qualify for these entry-level employment or advancement, they're not going to count in the performance measure.

As we've said before, they may be important in order to ensure that a participant gets employment, and just because something doesn't count in the credential measure, it doesn't mean that you can't provide a service that helps somebody get these OSHA-10 or general skill certificates, whatever one you're specifically thinking of. But, again, this is specifically related to the credential measure.

Again, another point that we like to sort of remind folks, that there's no comprehensive national lists. However, I think our hope is that through events like this, in addition to our other technical assistance and advisories, that you'll be able to sort of get this developed, a detailed understanding of the information about how to define a credential and then become familiar with the tools that we have out there for identifying credentials, which we're going to talk about in a little bit, and learn more about both how you can leverage credentials, what makes a quality and valuable credential, and see some existing examples of credential modules. So we'll move to the next slide here.

This is a note that I want to add here for grantees that are serving youth to talk about recognized secondary credentials. Some of those of you who are serving youth may be wondering at this point, what about diplomas or other high school equivalencies? Do these count as well?

And the answer to that is, yes. A secondary school diploma or alternate diploma, commonly referred to as a high school diploma, and secondary school equivalency certification for a high school education are both acceptable credentials. The one caveat here is that for these to count in the WIOA credential indicator, the participant must be employed or enrolled in education or training within one year after exit in order for those to count as a success. Go to the next slide here.

So just to say a little bit more about that, we just wanted to provide some examples of secondary school diplomas, alternate diplomas, and recognized equivalent that may be recognized in individual states, which could include obtaining certification of obtaining a passing score in the state-recognized high school equivalency test, earning a secondary school diploma or state-recognized equivalent through a credit-bearing secondary education program sanctioned by state law, code, or regulation, obtaining certification of passing a state-recognized competency-based assessment, and completion of a specified number of college credits all sort of fall under that umbrella.

All right. So this -- now, let's sort of dive into some of the things that we've definitely been getting questions about and which is this question of, what does not count as a credential for performance purposes?

So as we noted earlier, credentials result in occupational or technical skills that prepare for entry or advancement in an occupation are the things that can be counted for performance purposes.

However, things -- certificates awarded by local workforce development boards or workforce readiness certificates related to general hygiene, like handwashing, general safety, cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR, work readiness, and food handling certificates, again, while all useful in obtaining employment, these certificates do not document measurable technical or industry occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation, nor are they always recognized industrywide, and, therefore, they don't count towards the credential attainment outcomes.

Even in the -- even if there are situations where they're broadly required to qualify for entry-level employment or advance in employment, they still don't meet this criteria. Next slide.

All right. So a little bit more about this. That said, as I alluded to before, it should be noted that, even though these do not count towards the credential team indicator, these certificates are still often important and valuable and typically can be offered as a part of a grant-funded service, depending on the needs of the grant and the participants' needs. Many DOL programs allow for grantees to provide work readiness as an individualized career service, for example, rather than as a training.

Another related area that we often get questions is in relation to approaches such as micro-credentials and badges. And with respect to these situations, there's not a single clear-cut answer as to whether or not they would meet the criteria as a recognized credential for performance purposes. However, in a moment we're going to share some tools that you can use to help you determine whether or not they may be counted.

For those of you with DOL grants, remember that some current and future grants require that information about all credentials and competencies developed or delivered through the use of these public federal funds may be publicly -- may be -- must be made publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability, such as those through the use of the credential transparency description language specifications, which you'll remember Pam discussing earlier when talking about Credential Engine.

Efforts to format and organize credential information in this manner are not only oftentimes a compliance matter, but they can also be very helpful in more clearly defining whether a credential might count. So please be sure to look at the requirements for your own grant to ensure that you're in compliance, if you have this requirement as a part of your grant.

All right. So now, let's get into these -- some examples of resources relating to credential attainment that we've been alluding to throughout the presentation.

So we've provided you some examples already about these credential finders. We've also described some of the challenges in determining what counts for the credential indicator. So we're going to look at the tools specifically for the credential attainment indicator now to help you determine what sort of credentials may count towards that outcome measure.

Again, and maybe this is starting to feel like a broken record, but there is no comprehensive national list of approved credentials. That means that there's not a DOL list for WIOA. There's not one that necessarily is out there from a nonpublic entity as well.

There are some initiatives that Pam discussed earlier trying to get their arms around where all the credentials are, but the reality of it is that there are so many different types of credentials and new credentials being developed all the time between employer demand and workforce need that are going to vary from region to region and even state to state. There's just not -- it's not feasible to have a national list that people have to work from.

So when we talk about there being no national list, then I think that raises the question probably for a lot of you, and we've definitely seen it in the chat today, which is, how do I know if a credential is going to count for performance?

So to start, I think we have several different tools and resources that we -- that have already been developed that can help you and your organizations to determine who can and cannot be counted in the grant credential attainment performance outcomes. Some of the most notable resources are listed on this slide.

So when you look at the PowerPoint slide deck, you can find these links. I believe these links are also in the credential webinar resources document in the file share that you can download, but I want to take a little bit of time to walk through a few of these with you all.

The first one that we want to talk about is this WINTAC credential checklist. This credential checklist was created by WINTAC, which is the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center. And our friends from the vocational rehabilitation system will recognize that name because that is who created it, and they work for the Department of Education.

This checklist walks you through four questions to help them determine whether or not a particular credential would count for the credential attainment indicator.

Just to give you a quick sampling, the four questions that it walks through are, is the training program offered by one of the organizations or institutions that award postsecondary credentials listed here? And then it lists a series of organizations and institutions., Is the credential one of the WIOA types of acceptable credentials listed here? And then it lists the types of acceptable credentials that are defined in WIOA.

The third question it asks is, have you verified that the credential results in industry-wide measurable technical or industry occupational skills rather than general skill certificates, like we discussed, which do not count? And then the fourth question is, are you confident that the training is not excluded from the indicator? And then it references two types of training that, through the regulation, have been excluded from being in the denominator for this indicator.

So again, the -- if you want to look at this resource in more detail, again, check out the credential webinar resources download. There's a link to it, but it's a pretty useful way to sort of walk yourself through that process.

The next resource that we want to talk about is sort of built off of this premise that the -- of the WINTAC credential checklist. And so, the Department of Labor, along with a group of select states that were participating in a credential cohort, worked together to help develop this online credential decision tree tool.

Basically, what this tool is is it's an interactive tool where you answer a series of questions, similar to the WINTAC credential checklist but not exactly the same, that help you determine if the credential you are considering would count for performance purposes. So you walk through. You answer one question. Next one pops up and you go through and when you're done, it'll pop up, yes. This one does count. No. This one doesn't count. Or in some cases it'll say, well, it might count, but here's the consideration that you need to make.

So it's a pretty useful resource. We know we've heard from states that they've found it very useful in their own determinations of whether or not certain credentials should count towards the indicator.

Finally, I think, the last resource that I wanted to highlight for you all is this credential attainment decision path. And I think, while understanding whether a credential counts for the credential indicator is important, it's not the only factor that impacts a grantee's credential attainment rate. So remember that not every participant is going to be included in the credential attainment rate, as they must first be in education or training. And so, you may be wondering, how exactly is this WIOA credential attainment rate calculated?

And so, that's where I'm happy to tell you that there is a tool for this, too. While we don't expect you to be able to read this from the slide, the screenshot from the slide, we did want to let you know that there is a tool. This tool is one of the resources that you can download from the credential attainment resource page on WorkforceGPS.

And basically, what it does is it walks you through a series of questions in this flowchart style to help you determine, first, if the participant is included in the denominator of the calculation and then to determine if they should also be in a success in the numerator of the calculation.

So those are pretty much the tools that we wanted to highlight for you all. It looks like we've got a decent amount of time to address some more questions. And so, with that, I'm going to hand it back to Christina to navigate us through some of these questions you guys have.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Kellen. So yes. We had a lot of information in that section, and we have a lot of questions coming in. So you can still drop your questions into the chat. A reminder that we will get to as many as we can today, but if we don't address your topic, you can e-mail us at ETAPerforms@dol.gov, which is also included in the last slide here of the presentation. So you can always reach back out to us.

Let's get started with some basics. Evan, can you help us navigate? Can a credential be counted as measurable skill gain? There's some confusion out there about credential attainment versus measurable skill gain and where they may intersect. Could you address some of that?

EVAN ROSENBERG: Yes. Thanks, Christine. I will try to address some of that. There is some overlap with credential and measurable skill gain. And there is also you can think of it being somewhat linear where, on the way to achieving our credential, an individual participant might achieve a measurable skill gain or a few measurable skill gains on the way to achieving the credential. It really depends on the type of credential we're talking about.

So it's hard to speak in specifics when it really varies based on the training and the type of credential, et cetera. But, on the whole, there are credentials that also count as measurable skill gains.

A good example of that is a high school diploma or equivalency counts as both a credential and a measurable skill gain. The more likely scenario is that, on the path to attaining a specific credential, an individual may attain some measurable skill gains before they actually attain the credential. And that's the way the measurable skill gain measure is set up is they are interim skill gains that participants achieve during the program, which is why it's our only program-year-based measure and not based on exit like the rest of our indicators.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Evan. I hope that's helpful to the questioner. I'm going to stay with you for a moment, Evan, because there is a youth-specific question.

So someone has a question about OSHA-10 as a youth service. Now, this person seems to understand, okay. We're not counting it as a performance, but I need it to help get a youth prepared for work as a career service. How does that work? Is that allowable?

MR. ROSENBERG: Yes. I think Kellen touched on that in his presentation, that just because something doesn't count as a credential does not mean -- I feel like I'm using multiple double negatives here. So I apologize, but if it's not meeting the definition of credential, it does not mean it's not an allowable service.

So for example, OSHA-10 is absolutely an allowable WIOA youth service. Even though it does not meet our definition of credential, it very well may be necessary for the youth, based on their individual service strategy and the type of training they're doing, to pay for and get the OSHA-10 certificate. And so, that's absolutely an allowable service.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Evan.

Pam, I'm going to go back to you. Some folks have questions about occupational certification, certificate, other recognized industry occupational skills. How do we find out the difference?

MS. FRUGOLI: Okay. Well, I know it's often very confusing because people could say the word cert and that could be either one. But a certificate is usually based on completion of training. It's just saying you went through this training, and you completed it.

But a certification often has additional requirements. Most certifications have examinations that have passing scores. And if you don't -- even if you take the -- even if you sit through the entire course, if you take the exam and you don't get a passing score, you don't obtain the certification. So they're often much more rigorous.

And in addition, I -- it's one thing I didn't mention in talking the certification [inaudible], but there are different types of certification and some of them you can only get if you already have work experience in the occupation. So those are like advanced and specialty certifications, and those are identified as such in a column in certification finder. And the more entry-level ones are identified as core certifications.

So it's much more likely that a certification will actually prepare someone to enter an occupation or industry. Certificates may or may not be a shorter-term and more focused on just certain skill aspects, but they're basically rely on completion.

MS. ECKENROTH: Okay. Thanks, Pam. I'm going to stick with you for just a minute. We're having some questions about, "What about jobs that require you to have CPR like being a paramedic or medical professions or being a lifeguard?" Can you about that?

MS. FRUGOLI: Sure. I mean, it goes back to what we were saying is that you can certainly use WIOA funds to pay for those credentials. But, again, there's no one who does CPR full-time. And so, if someone is trying to be a lifeguard and you get them CPR certification, you can pay for it, but they would still need other training. That wouldn't be sufficient to qualify them. So it doesn't count for credential attainment purposes, but it is eligible as a career service.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Pam. Okay. So let's see. What else do we have in the chat that folks have a lot of questions? Okay. So people are asking where they can access the credential attainment decision path tool and the checklist. Are those shown as resources?

So they are on the resource page, and that's in our file share. You can access those there.

MR. GRODE: Yeah. Christina, also, if folks are more comfortable navigating WorkforceGPS, there's a page on WorkforceGPS that's called the credential attainment resource page that should also have links to those tools.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Kellen. I'm seeing some questions coming in about the ETPL. Some folks are not as familiar with ETPL as others. That's the eligible training provider list. So Kellen, can you talk a little bit about can you get multiple credentials in a program? Could a program offer -- award multiple credentials, or do you only award one credential? When you go to trainingproviderresults.gov, what can you see there?

MR. GRODE: Yes. So it's a good question, and I think it's a multi-part answer. So in terms of the question about somebody earning multiple credentials, in terms of the performance indicator calculation of credential attainment only. They only need one credential to count as a success.

Now, you can report up to three credentials on a participant to the Department of Labor, and we want folks to report as many credentials as we can within our records. But in order to -- in terms of just ensuring that somebody counts as a success in the indicator, it only requires one credential attained.

That said, to the question on the ETP side of the question, I think a program that offers multiple credentials is great. The way that our reporting is set up, it -- we only collect one credential name per training program, but that doesn't mean that you couldn't -- there's not additional value, potentially, in a training program that offers multiple credentials.

So I think we don't want to dissuade folks from looking at a program that may offer multiple credentials or maybe putting somebody in multiple training programs that meet -- if there's a need for them to earn multiple different credentials in order to proceed on their career path; right?

It's just a matter of trying to balance that out with the desire to not have reporting be super burdensome on the grantees; right? And so, that's why sometimes maybe we'll have a little less information being reported to us and, therefore, showing up on trainingproviderresults.gov, for example, in a scenario where a program maybe leads to more than one credential.

MS. ECKENROTH: Kellen, I'm going to stick with you and ETPs for just a moment, a little bit longer here. Someone was asking, "Does DOL go back and check a state, whatever a state puts on the ETPL list so that they can confirm that whatever the state allows on the ETPL will be a credential, or do the states have their own processes?" Can we expand a little bit more about the role of the ETPL list?

MR. GRODE: Sure. And I think the answer to that question is that it's going to be a little bit of both; right? So there's -- states are going to have these processes and procedures that they have to put in place in order to comply with the requirements both in the law and that we've laid out in more detail in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 08-19, which relates to the ETP eligibility.

But I think also, ETA's and DOL's process for looking at what the states are doing relies on -- in this arena in particular, heavily on monitoring that's typically done by our regional offices. And so, in a case -- and Christina, having worked in the regional office in the past, maybe has additional insight on this. But, essentially, somebody that was doing a monitoring visit and looking at the ETPL list may look and say, what credential does this training program lead to? And if the documentation is not up to snuff, then there could be consequences for a state not complying with our guidelines that we put out there.

But, yeah. Actually, Christina, I'd be curious if you have additional insights on that one.

MS. ECKENROTH: Yeah. So as Kellen said, it's not like there's an automated system we're using, but folks do go back out and compare the processes of a state during the regular monitoring process, the processes of the state for the eligible training provider lists, and compare it with what is required.

And if there are a lot of things on the ETPL that don't meet our requirement, they don't result in a credential, they don't appear to be in demand, they don't have a rationale for why that would be industry recognized, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, a lot of weird stuff in your ETPL -- not saying that happens a lot, but if there is some, that would definitely be something that would be addressed with the grantee by their monitor, who is typically the regional office. So we are taking a look at that. Good question.

Take a pause here so we can see all the questions that are coming in fast and furiously.

There is another question about additional skills inside of a training counting as a credential. So this is more about the credential and MSG crossover. So Evan, can I tap you again with this question? Do additional skills inside of a training count as a credential? For example, someone is going for a medical certification. Does an interim credential count as the credential, or would that be more of an MSG?

MR. ROSENBERG: So unfortunately, my answer is it really depends. It's hard to be able to say yes or no without knowing what the specific credential is. And because I'm not an expert on every credential, I couldn't say if an interim credential would count.

I think, generally speaking, often some of those interim credentials would meet measurable skill gain and not credential attainment, but there are some credential indicators that are interim credentials that could potentially meet the credential indicator. So it really depends.

I think the best advice I can give for both trying to figure out what counts as the credential and what counts as a measurable skill gain is to refer to our our guidance, our TEGLs, and use the definitions for both the credential and the measurable skill gain indicators and compare the type of skill gain or the type of certificate or credential attained to our definition in the guidance and determine if it meets the bar, which is kind of why we're saying there is no list is because there are so many credentials out there.

It would be impossible to create a list of what does and doesn't count, and the best we can do is provide training for how to use our definition on both credential and measurable skill gains to assess each individual skill or certificate or credential and determine if they meet that definition.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Evan. Kellen, can I come back to you with a question about online schools? Do diplomas from online schools count as well?

MR. GRODE: Yeah. It's a good question, and we get questions on this both in the credential arena as well as the eligible training provider arena. And I think when you're talking about something that's taken online, to us, I think, the only difference is the format of the course; right?

And so, the rules that you're applying to determining whether something is a credential or whether it can be an eligible training provider, you're going to follow that same set of rules. You're going to look at the performance of a program or a credential. You're going to look at does it meet all these different components of the definition. Is it recognized by the industry? Is it providing these technical industry or occupational skills?

So I think the answer to looking at something online is to essentially treat it the same as you would if they had a physical location and judge it on the same rubric.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Kellen. I want to stay with that theme and ask about micro-credentials and the like. Earlier in the presentation, Greg talked a little bit about all these new terms, badges, micro-credentials, all of that. How do you evaluate that? What are -- what should folks use as their parameters for evaluating those kinds of term -- things?

MR. GRODE: Yeah. It's a good question, and I think, for me, if it was me doing it, I might just go and use that tool that we talked about, the credentialled decision tree tool, and just go through and look at the credentials, look at the questions, answer the questions about it, and see where it comes out; right?

I think that's going to be the same for whether we're talking about a micro-credential or an online program or an interim credential like Evan was talking about, is sort of just going through and methodically answering the questions that you need to know to know if it meets those definitions. I think, to me, that's the strategy that I would use, but people can approach it in whatever way makes the most sense for them, as long as they're ensuring that it meets all those different components of the definition.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Kellen. So that's a good place for people to start.

Greg, there's a question for your section, if you can step in and address. "Are locally developed credentials that are endorsed by local area employers but they're not nationally recognized, so, very localized, are those acceptable?"

MR. SCHEIB: Yeah. Thanks, Christina. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. If -- obviously, a credential may not necessarily be portable in the sense that it's a very localized credential or relevant to the local area. But, certainly, I mean, what defines industry recognized is that it's in demand by people in your local -- businesses in your local area that's evaluated and, again, are using it as a hiring criteria. So potentially, yes. That could be okay.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Greg. All right. I think that we have time for maybe one more question before we need to start our wrap up. Let's see if we can find a really broad one that meets a lot of criteria for folks.

So we have talked a lot about our tools, a lot about the parameters, and about how folks can address the framework. I think one last question to ask might be for the group and specifically for Pam.

"How do you get to industry recognized credentials generally? So if something becomes an approved credential among a lot of states based upon industry-wide demand, how does that flow out? Does it become a -- how does that become a national standard?"

MS. FRUGOLI: Okay. Well, yeah. You're right. Industry recognized is not always some official thing that you can tell. When we have the icon I on certifications, for example, in Career One-Stop, it's because an actual industry organization such as the National Association of Manufacturers -- Manufacturing Institute has recognized or endorsed it or the Health Professions Network.

So yes. That isn't -- being officially endorsed is one indicator of industry recognized, but it's not the only indicator. And again, then you really have to go to local employers or even the Chamber of Commerce in your area. Groups that represent employers can say this is something that industry demands and then its industry recognized but not as official.

But, again, that's something that's ongoing over time and can change. I mean, that's one reason why we also look at -- the chili pepper means that it's been mentioned in job postings. So that in itself is a form of industry recognition because employers are asking for it in job postings. So that's another another way to be industry recognized.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Pam.

Well, I think that that about wraps it up for all of our questions. We have addressed a whole bunch of questions, and I thank all of the audience participants for your really great and thoughtful questions. If you are still confused about something or you need to revisit it or we didn't address sufficiently your specific question, you can get back to us at ETAPerform@dol.gov right here on the end of the slide. Thank you very much.

We have covered a lot of material today, and we do hope that you've come away with some new information and some resources and really urge you to check out those resources.

If we didn't get your question. please let us know. We'll get back to you. And thank you for joining us, and we would like to stay, if you can, a few moments longer to give us feedback about the event. And I'll pass it over to Laura to wrap it up. Thanks, Laura.

(END)