



Credentials of Value

A Working Definition for West Virginia Postsecondary Education

Credential WV is West Virginia's statewide initiative to expand access to high quality, workforce-relevant credentials that help learners gain skills and advance their careers while strengthening the state's economy. A key component of this work is ensuring that credentials developed by institutions meet minimum standards for delivering knowledge and skills while creating value for learners.

This value can be both monetary and non-monetary, and both intrinsic and extrinsic, but ultimately should be both demonstrable and measurable. These definitions of "Credentials of Value" were developed alongside efforts to promote microcredentialing in West Virginia, document the completion of microcredentials, and measure their impact on student success.

Short Definition:

Credentials of Value are education awards—such as degrees and short-term certificates—that advance economic and social mobility, opening doors to better jobs, higher salaries, and opportunities for professional advancement. Credentials of value provide a strong return on investment of time and money, either alone or combined with other credentials and work experience.

Long Definition:

A *Credential of Value* in West Virginia is an education award such as a degree, certificate, or a skills-focused micro-credential—earned either after high school or in addition to a high school diploma—that qualifies an individual to get a better job at a higher wage with improved opportunities for professional advancement.

Credentials of value meet established standards for quality, workforce relevance, and learner impact. They may be offered by colleges and universities, by trade schools, or by industry associations. Their value is enhanced when they are accessible, affordable, and can be combined with other awards and work-based learning to earn higher credentials, including degrees. Credentials of value deliver a positive return on the investment of a learner's time and money within a reasonable timeframe and provide economic benefit to local and regional communities by helping to meet current and future workforce needs.

Credentials are most valuable when their content and job connections are transparent, and the knowledge and skills gained are validated by employers or through reliable assessments. Credentials of value are transferable across institutions and employers, delivering clear outcomes that prepare individuals for meaningful employment, enhanced pay, and continued learning.

Soundbite:

A *Credential of Value* provides valuable skills that can help you get a better job and a higher wage. It should be worth what you pay for it, and you should see real benefits within a reasonable time after completing it.