Partnerships for Microcredential Development

Maximizing Responsiveness to Workforce Needs at the State and Regional Level

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. Based on conversations and feedback from a statewide convening in February 2025, three areas of focus were identified with three workgroups created to address the following topics:

- Transcription and Data Management
- Institutional Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance
- Workforce Connections

The efforts of these groups have led to a set of recommendations that reflect both the shared vision and the practical steps needed to advance credentialing innovation in West Virginia.

This report presents the work of Workgroup 3: Workforce Connections. Co-led by Jodi Oliveto (WVHEPC/CTCS) and Cathy Monteroso (West Liberty University), the group was charged with exploring how higher education can maximize responsiveness to workforce needs at the state level and within individual workforce regions. The primary charge of the group was to develop and execute a plan for in-person meetings in each of the state's seven workforce investment boards by the end of 2025; this initiative was named *Credential WV Connect*.

Program Structure and Timeline

Credential WV Connect represents a comprehensive statewide effort to strengthen workforce connections across West Virginia's higher education institutions. This collaborative program encompassed all seven WorkForce WV regions of the state, involving 18 public universities and community and technical colleges. The structured statewide tour was designed to engage regional stakeholders including employers, higher education institutions, industry associations, and other non-profit organizations. The seven Credential WV Connect stops were held between September and December 2025.

| Credential WV Connect: Workforce Tour		
Region	**Hosting Institution**	**Event Date**
Region 1	New River Community and Technical College (Additional Hosts: Bluefield State University, Concord University, WVU-Tech)	9/9/2025
Region 2	Marshall University (Additional Hosts: Mountwest Community and Technical College, Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College)	9/8/2025
Region 3	West Virginia State University (Additional Host: Bridge Valley Community and Technical College)	10/6/2025
Region 4	WVU-Parkersburg	11/17/2025
Region 5	West Liberty University (Additional Host: West Virginia Northern Community College	11/18/2025
Region 6	Pierpont Community and Technical College (Additional Hosts: Fairmont State University, Glenville State University, West Virginia University, West Virginia Wesleyan University)	12/1/2025
Region 7	Eastern Community and Technical College (Additional Hosts: Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, Shepherd University)	12/2/2025

Themes

Universal Skills Recognition: Participants emphasized the critical importance of essential skills (communication, adaptability, teamwork, leadership) as foundational competencies needed across all industry sectors, validating that micro-credentials could help to address this universal need.

Collaborative Partnership Model: Employers want meaningful involvement in the credential design phase, not simply as validators of completed programs. This early engagement ensures credentials meet actual business needs and builds employer ownership in the credential ecosystem.

Organizational Readiness and Succession Planning: Participants recognized that micro-credentials can address critical business needs beyond individual worker training, particularly in knowledge transfer, leadership transitions, and succession planning for small businesses.

Geographic Coverage and Institutional Participation
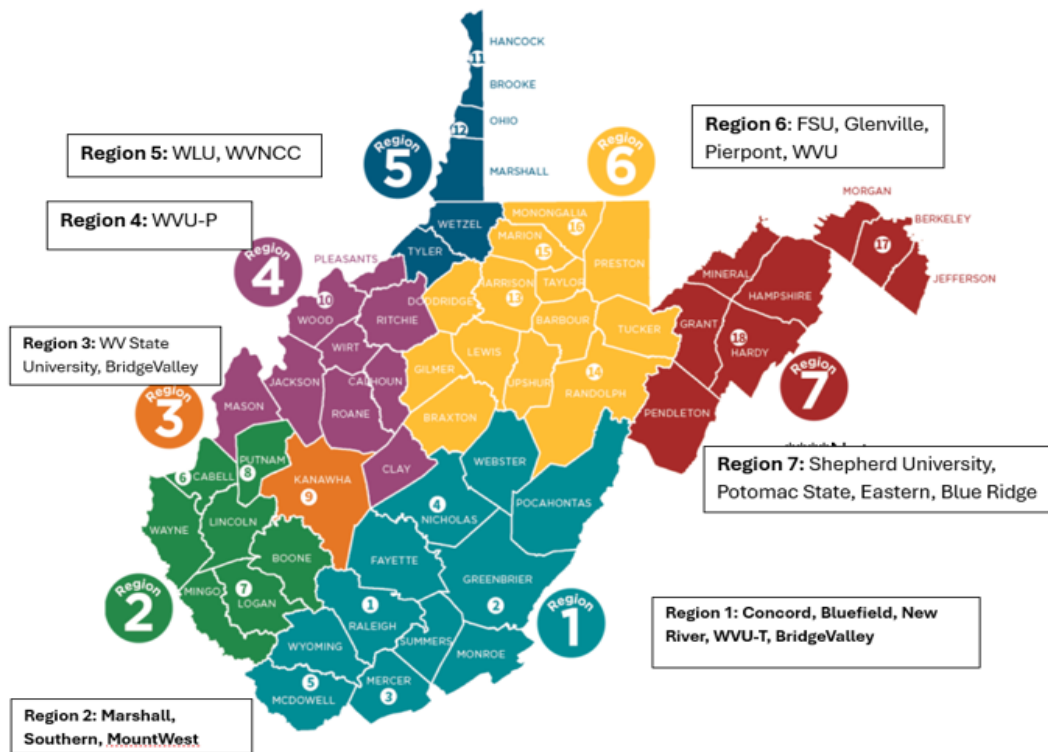
The Credential WV Connect initiative spanned all seven regions of West Virginia.

Strong Stakeholder Validation and Buy-in Achieved: The *Credential WV Connect* tour validated the micro-credentialing concept with both higher education institutions and business/industry partners. Attendees demonstrated strong understanding of micro-credential value propositions and expressed enthusiasm for continued collaboration. Attendance at each event and positive industry feedback indicate significant stakeholder buy-in.

Collective Advocacy Essential for Micro-credential Success: A critical insight emerged around the need for collective advocacy to establish a cohesive brand and narrative for micro-credentials in West Virginia. Stakeholders recognized that beyond individual credential development, the initiative requires coordinated messaging about the value and impact of micro-credentials on workforce development. Digital badging under the Credential WV umbrella can help to address this concern.

Obstacles

Policy Framework Development: The need for policy structures that enable rapid credential adoption suggests current regulatory or administrative processes may create barriers to timely implementation. This concern will be addressed in part through a comprehensive review and revision of relevant agency policies.

Scaling Collaborative Design: While employers want early involvement in credential co-design, developing systematic processes for meaningful employer engagement at scale across multiple institutions and sectors can present logistical challenges.

Workforce Development and Educational Ecosystem Impact

The initiative positions West Virginia's higher education system to more effectively respond to workforce needs and strengthen the educational ecosystem through:

- **Institutional Collaboration:** Enhanced coordination between institutions, reducing silos and improving resource sharing
- **Credential Mobility:** Improved credential recognition and transferability, enabling greater student mobility
- **Workforce Alignment:** Strengthened employer partnerships and economic development alignment that connects education directly to workforce needs
- **Strategic Specialization:** Regional specialization while maintaining statewide coherence

Recommended Next Steps

Systematic Stakeholder Engagement: Institutions plan to integrate micro-credential discussions into ongoing stakeholder meetings.

Targeted Partnership Development: Follow up on specific partnership opportunities, to address inquiries about ongoing training programs incorporating micro-credentials. These pilot partnerships can serve as models for other institutions.

Collaborative Design Processes: Establish formal mechanisms for co-designing micro-credentials with employers from the initial concept stage, responding to the clear industry preference for early involvement.

Collective Advocacy Strategy: Develop coordinated messaging and branding for the Credential WV initiative that clearly articulates value propositions for both learners and employers, addressing the identified need for cohesive communication.

Enhanced Feedback Collection: Improve survey distribution and other input gathering mechanisms to gather more comprehensive evaluation data. Consider alternative feedback strategies (beyond traditional surveys) to capture stakeholder perspectives.

Policy Development: Work with faculty advisory councils and provosts to identify and address policy barriers to rapid credential adoption, creating frameworks that support agile credential development and implementation.

Summary

The *Credential WV Connect* initiative represents a significant step forward in West Virginia's higher education and workforce development strategy. Through its comprehensive geographic coverage, collaborative leadership model, and systematic community engagement approach, the program is well-positioned to strengthen ongoing connections between educational credentials and workforce needs across the state.

The initiative's continued success will depend on coordination between participating institutions, sustained community engagement, and ongoing alignment with employer needs. The structured tour approach and distributed leadership model provide a strong foundation for achieving these objectives and establishing West Virginia as a leader in credential-workforce integration.

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- Maureen Persons, Director, Employment Services WorkForce WV

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- Lauren Arbaugh, Eastern WV CTC
- Jason Best, Shepherd University
- Tiffany Ellis-Williams, WV Community and Technical College System
- Joni Gray, Pierpont CTC
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* Deceased

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Institution Event Hosts:

- Eastern CTC
- Marshall University
- New River CTC
- Pierpont CTC
- West Liberty University
- West Virginia State University
- WVU-Parkersburg