credential
WEST VIRGINIA

A TOOLKIT TO

LAUNCH & EXPAND
MICROCREDENTIALS

WEST VIRGINIA
**Higher Education
Policy Commission**

WEST VIRGINIA
**Community & Technical
College System**

Letter from the Chancellor
January 2026

One of the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic was the need for colleges and universities to offer more short-term academic programs that provide in-demand training and certifications to get West Virginians into the workplace — earning a family-supporting wage and on track for advancement in their careers. At the same time, we've seen a growing expectation among students, families, and policymakers that investments in time and money pay stronger dividends in the near-term as well as the long-term.

Our institutions have responded to this changing landscape in many ways, including through *Credential West Virginia:* our statewide initiative to expand access to short-term, skills-based microcredentials aligned with workforce needs. Over the past two years, our universities and our community and technical colleges have collaborated in response to student demand and industry need to:

- Redesign curriculum to reflect skills-based learning
- Integrate technology to award, document, and track new credentials, including microcredentials and badges
- Create a shared quality framework to enhance transparency and trust
- Align efforts with other statewide initiatives such as improving transfer and developing new credential pathways into employment

Microcredentials launched to date align with high-demand fields such as healthcare and business, including:

- A microcredential in Foundational Accounting Proficiency at Concord University
- Certified Customer Service Specialist and Technical Sales Specialist microcredentials at New River Community and Technical College
- EKG Technician and Emergency Medical Responder certifications at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College
- A microcredential in Telebehavioral Health at Marshall University

Along the way, teams of institutional volunteers worked with agency staff to tackle some of the barriers to developing microcredentials while providing resources for colleges and universities at different stages in the process. Their work led to the set of papers presented here that reflect a shared vision for credential innovation and the steps that can be taken at the local level.

I'm thankful for all the volunteers along with agency staff members who supported their work. I'm also thankful for the employers, members of workforce boards, and representatives of community organizations who attended one of our seven *Credential WV Connect* events held around the state in late 2025. These events attracted 250 individuals to address local workforce needs and the role of microcredentials and meeting those needs.

Credential West Virginia is moving into a new phase in 2026 centered on **learning mobility:** helping students carry their academic and work-based learning from institution to institution —and between higher education and employment — for maximum value. This involves minimizing credit loss in institutional transfer, greater recognition and application of prior learning toward degree requirements, and continued efforts to better align postsecondary offerings with workforce needs.

Effective and efficient learning mobility systems help students get recognized for what they know and can do, accelerating credential completion and opening doors to better jobs. Look for more in this space in the coming year!

Sincerely,

Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Ph.D.
West Virginia's Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission
West Virginia Community and Technical College System

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Credential Innovation in West Virginia

Credential WV is West Virginia's statewide initiative to expand access to short-term workforce-relevant education and training programs—leading to receipt of *microcredentials*—that help learners gain skills and advance their careers while strengthening the state's economy. Microcredentials are short, focused learning experiences that help students build specific in-demand skills. They offer a flexible, accessible alternative to traditional degree programs, allowing learners to gain valuable, job-ready competencies that can be applied immediately in the workforce. Microcredentials can be standalone programs or incorporated into degree pathways, giving students a leg up in the job market.

Credential WV was launched with a statewide microcredentials summit in October 2024. Following a second statewide convening held in February 2025, workgroups were created to address three areas of need that emerged from participant conversations and feedback:

- How to validate, document, track, and report completion of microcredentials
- How to help institutions scale microcredential offerings that are high-quality, transparent, aligned with workforce needs, and implemented through sound institutional processes.
- How to improve communication with employers and industry representatives to ensure that microcredentials respond to local and regional needs for specific workplace knowledge and skills

The efforts of these groups led to a set of recommendations that reflect both the shared vision and the practical steps needed to advance credentialing innovation in West Virginia. The four papers in this compendium represent recommendations on definitions, policies, processes, and relationships that can drive a successful microcredentialing initiative at the institutional or statewide level.

A first order of business was to provide a working definition of "credentials of value" to guide development of microcredentials while addressing broader questions about the return on investment of postsecondary education. The statement *Credentials of Value: A Working Definition for West Virginia Postsecondary Education* also anticipates future questions about the content, relevancy, and trustworthiness of all sorts of credentials (including degrees) to deliver on their promises of learner impact. While "value" can be both monetary and non-monetary, and both intrinsic and extrinsic, it should also be demonstrable and measurable. The credentials of value statement was developed alongside efforts to expand microcredentialing in West Virginia, document the completion of microcredentials, and measure their impact on student success.

Workgroup 1: Microcredential Data Collection and Transcription, was charged with exploring how institutions can document, track, and report completion of microcredentials; addressing elements such use of official academic transcripts or other platforms; solutions for Banner and other specific student information; barriers to auto-awarding (or auto-notification) of credentials; and concerns related to data reporting to state and federal entities and compliance with relevant regulatory requirements. The workgroup report focuses on four primary areas: (1) recommended microcredential-level data elements; (2) recommended student/learner-level data elements; (3) outcomes measures; and (4) considerations for selecting and implementing a student microcredential completion-tracking system, including a centralized repository that provides employers with a clear, comprehensive view of the skills and competencies individuals can gain across programs.

Workgroup 2: Institutional Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance, was charged with exploring how institutions can scale microcredential offerings with urgency and integrity. The focus: ensuring that microcredentials developed in West Virginia are high-quality, transparent, aligned with workforce needs, and implemented through sound institutional processes. The group was guided by questions including *"How do we create microcredentials at scale and with deliberate speed?"* and *"How do we know when a microcredential meets minimum thresholds for quality and trustworthiness?"*. The team examined national frameworks, institutional practices, and emerging quality standards to create a set of resources for West Virginia institutions.

Workgroup 3: Workforce Connections, was charged with exploring how higher education institutions can maximize their 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 board regions by the end of 2025. This initiative, named *Credential WV Connect*, succeeded in engaging regional stakeholders including employers, colleges and universities, industry associations, and other non-profit organizations in Beckley (Beaver), Charleston (Institute), Fairmont, Huntington, Moorefield, Parkersburg, and West Liberty.

These papers establish a sound foundation for institutions in West Virginia and beyond looking to diversify their credential offerings in response to student demands, employer needs, and broader market forces impacting higher education. We want to thank members of the *Credential WV* leadership team for their advisement and hard work over the course of the past two years:

Jason Best, Shepherd University
Corley Dennison, Southern West Virginia CTC
James Fauver, BridgeValley CTC
Zorrie Georgieva, WVHEPC/CTCS
Angela Hawk, West Virginia Northern Community College
Brandon Mills, New River CTC
Cathy Monteroso, West Liberty University

Jodi Oliveto, WVHEPC/CTCS
Kish Price, Marshall University
Amanda Sauchuck, Concord University
Beez Schell, WVHEPC/CTCS
Roy Simmons, West Virginia State University
Mary Sortino, Fairmont State University
Kristi Wood, Mountwest CTC

Sincerely,

Chris Rasmussen Ph.D., *Credential WV* Initiative Co-Chair
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Julia Spears Ph.D., *Credential WV* Initiative Co-Chair
Assistant Provost of Online Education and Certification, Marshall University

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.

WORKGROUP 1

Microcredential Data Collection and Transcription

Consideration of Data Collection for Creation and Completion of Microcredentials

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 associated 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 1: Microcredential Data Collection and Transcription**. Co-led by Zorrie Georgieva (WVHEPC/WVCTCS), Roy Simmons (West Virginia State University), and James Fauver (BridgeValley Community & Technical College) the group was charged with exploring how institutions can document, track, and report completion of microcredentials; addressing elements such use of official academic transcripts or other platforms; solutions for Banner and other specific student information; barriers to auto-awarding (or auto-notification) of credentials; and concerns related to data reporting to state and federal entities and compliance with relevant regulatory requirements.

Challenges and Opportunities Presented by Microcredentials

As microcredential offerings continue to expand in higher education, institutions face the challenge of understanding who participates, how programs impact learners, and how to measure outcomes. Student-level data collection provides the foundation for transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making. A consistent statewide data collection system would ensure that institutions report information in the same way, allowing for an accurate and reliable record of program activity over time. This system could also serve multiple future purposes, such as guiding institutional productivity measures, supporting statewide reporting, and examining the impact on students' workforce pathways. Building such a framework now will ensure flexibility and readiness for evolving policy and accountability needs.

Equally important is maintaining a current, public-facing microcredential inventory that is easily accessible to learners so they can see what is offered, how to enroll, and how each credential fits into academic and career pathways. Such an inventory should include key elements about the microcredentials to facilitate decisions about what microcredential fits best the needs of the learner.

Clear, up-to-date information reduces barriers to participation, supports access and informed choice, and aligns with internal reporting requirements and standards for quality.

A centralized microcredential repository also provides employers with a clear, comprehensive view of the skills and competencies individuals can gain across programs. By accessing verified information in one place, employers can more easily identify microcredentials that offer skills aligning with their workforce needs. In addition, employers can offer direct feedback on emerging skill gaps, helping institutions tailor future credential development to better meet industry demands. This feedback loop strengthens collaboration between institutions and employers and ensures that credentials remain relevant, transparent, and aligned with real-world workforce requirements.

This document outlines recommended data elements and considerations for institutions developing or scaling microcredential offerings.

This document focuses on three primary areas: (1) microcredential-level data elements; (2) student/learner-level data elements; (3) outcomes and completion; and (4) considerations for selecting and implementing a student microcredential completion-tracking system.

Microcredential-Level Data Elements

Microcredential data elements are organized into tiers: 1) required or essential; and 2) optional or recommended. While the latter are not required, these additional elements can help institutions analyze enrollment and participation patterns and better assess learner outcomes.

Minimum Required Data Elements

1. **Institution Name and Institutional Reporting Code**

   o   Identifies the institution offering the credential

2. **Proposed Microcredential Title**

   o   A clear, student-facing title that reflects the purpose and content of the microcredential.

3. **CIP Code (Classification of Instructional Programs)**

   o   Aligns the microcredential with national classification standards.

4. **Microcredential Identifier**

   o   A unique identifier assigned to each microcredential. It may consist of a combination of the CIP code and a sequence number. This identifier will be assigned by WVHEPC/WVCTCS and will help distinguish multiple microcredentials that align with the same CIP code.

5. **Total Credit Hours** *or* **Contact Hours**

   o Specify whether the credential is credit-bearing or non-credit and report the total instructional hours accordingly.

6. **Level of Instruction**

   o Indicate whether the microcredential is **Undergraduate** or **Graduate** level.

7. **Stackability**

   o Identify whether the microcredential is part of a **stackable pathway** at your institution (Yes/No). Please refer to the stackable credential definition.

   o If yes, describe or list the pathway or credential(s) it stacks into, if possible.

8. **HEAPS Eligibility (West Virginia Community & Technical Colleges Only)**

   o Note whether the microcredential is eligible for **HEAPS Workforce funding** (Yes/No).

9. **Credit vs. Non-Credit**

   o Indicate whether the microcredential is delivered for **Credit** or **Non-Credit**.

10. **Academic Year of Implementation**

Indicate the academic year when the microcredential was first offered and available for students to complete.

Additional Recommended Elements

11. **Instructional Modality**

   o Online, Hybrid, In-person.

12. **Credential Type**

   o Badge, Certificate, Industry Certification, etc. A microcredential may be associated with more than one category.

13. **Employer/Industry Alignment**

   o Indicate whether the credential was developed in collaboration with industry/employers and/or aligned to specific workforce needs.

14. **Licensure or Certification**

   o Identify any specific third-party issued licensure, certification, or industry recognized credential earned upon microcredential completion.

15. Credential Outcome

- o Identify the specific learning outcomes, objectives, competencies, or skills students gain upon completion.

16. Delivery Timeline

- o Estimated time to completion if enrolled or engaged full-time or the equivalent of full time (e.g., 8 weeks, 1 semester).

Microcredential Inventory Implementation Considerations

- Establish a **centralized database or registry** of microcredentials to ensure up-to-date and accessible information.

- Ensure practices are in place to maintain **data quality, accuracy, and timeliness**. Consider processes for deactivating or terminating a microcredential and ways to communicate the changes to WVHEPC/WVCTCS when a new microcredential is established or a current one is terminated.

- Potential future data elements to consider for inclusion in the microcredential inventory:

  - o CIP-to-SOC crosswalk: a potential CIP-to-SOC code crosswalk offers a valuable opportunity to better understand the intended occupational pathways associated with each microcredential. By linking instructional programs (CIP codes) to corresponding occupations (SOC codes), institutions can identify the career fields that microcredentials are designed to support, assess alignment with workforce needs, and evaluate the potential employment outcomes for completers.

  - o Licensure or Industry-Recognized Credential: Including third-party validation is especially important when a microcredential leads to an industry-recognized credential or licensure. Verification from an external accrediting body, certifying agency, or licensing authority ensures that the microcredential meets established industry standards and is valued by employers.

Student-Level Data Elements

As with the microcredential-level elements, student-level data elements are tiered—core (required) and optional—so institutions can build a reliable "minimum viable dataset" for reporting and accountability, while also enabling deeper analyses where capacity allows. The core tier captures the essentials needed to track participation and completion consistently across programs and institutions; the optional tier adds context that helps explain who learners are, how they engage, and which factors may correlate with success.

Core Data Elements (Required)

These fields ensure that institutions can uniquely identify and track students across systems and over time.

1. **Unique Student Identifier**

    o Internal system ID or SSN. Student unique identifier is related to tracking students within the same institution (learners completing multiple microcredentials/credentials), facilitating transfer/enrollment in other institutions or exploring student workforce outcomes after program completion.

2. **Demographics**

    o **Name**

    o **Date of Birth**

    o **Gender**

    o **Race/Ethnicity**

    o **Residency Status** (in-state, out-of-state, international)

3. **Enrollment Information**

    o Microcredential Title and CIP Code

    o Term and Year of Enrollment

    o Credit/Non-credit Designation

    o Credit Hours or Contact Hours

Supplemental/Optional Data Elements

Institutions may choose to collect these fields to better understand student needs, barriers, and outcomes.

1. **Educational Background**

    o Highest level of education attained prior to enrollment

    o Concurrent degree-seeking status (if enrolled in other programs)

2. **Employment & Workforce Context**

    o Employment status at enrollment (full-time, part-time, unemployed)

    o Industry or occupational field (if applicable)

    o Employer sponsorship or partnership involvement

3. **Socioeconomic Indicators**

   o   Pell or other need-based aid eligibility (if credit-bearing)

   o   Household income bracket (self-reported, optional)

   o   First-generation college status

4. **Location/Accessibility**

   o   Zip code or county of residence

   o   Delivery mode (online, hybrid, in-person)

   o   Campus/location of instruction

Outcome & Completion Data

To evaluate program effectiveness and return on investment, institutions should also track:

Completion Status

   o   Completed / Not Completed

   o   Date of completion

Credential Earned

   o   Digital badge, certificate, or other credential

   o   Verification (badging platform, transcript entry, etc.)

Post-completion Outcomes (where feasible)

   o   Employment changes (promotion, new job, increased wages)

   o   Continuing education (enrollment in degree or stackable credential)

   o   Industry-recognized certifications earned

Additional Considerations Relative to Data Collection

Privacy & Compliance

- Ensure compliance with FERPA and other applicable data privacy regulations.

- Clarify which fields are required vs. voluntary to avoid excluding learners.

Data Tracking System

Choosing where and how to house microcredential enrollment and completion records is a strategic decision that involves weighing each system's capabilities and trade-offs—not just what's convenient today. Institutions need to consider how completions will be verified and awarded; whether recognition appears on the academic transcript, as a digital badge, or both; the depth and flexibility of reporting; the ease and integrity of student application and enrollment; and the portability of learning (e.g., non-credit to credit, stacking, and transfer). Deliberate selections with well-designed integrations can minimize duplication, strengthen data quality and compliance, and ensure that clear learning outcomes and credit equivalencies travel with the student. Taking time to evaluate these dimensions up front prevents rework later and supports learners, faculty, and employers with consistent, credible evidence of achievement.

These system considerations are explored below. This is not an exhaustive list as there may be additional considerations depending on the microcredential offerings at each campus.

Institutions may utilize a matrix to determine the strengths and limitations of their available systems.

Data Tracking Decision Matrix (could be modified)

Criterion	SIS (Banner)	LMS	Digital Badging Provider (e.g., Credly, Accredible)	Third-Party/ External System
Authoritative record for student identity				
Verification of microcredential completion and award				
Transcript notation support				
Digital badge system integration (if applicable)				
Reporting and reporting customization				
Ease of learner self-enroll				
Transfer and credit equivalency support				
Cost and resourcing				

Authoritative record for student identity - an authoritative record for student identity—one agreed-upon source for who the learner is. Without it, awards can be misattributed, duplicated, or lost across systems.

Importance

Ensures the right learner is verified, awarded, and—if needed—has a credential corrected or revoked with a defensible audit trail.

Allows different systems to sync as automatically as possible, reducing reconciliation work and automation failures (e.g., LMS completion → SIS award → badge issuance).

Links non-credit and credit records so learning can stack toward certificates/degrees and transfer across departments or institutions.

Recommended practices

Establish identity proofing and a documented merge/split policy for duplicate records.

Version and audit identity attributes (legal/preferred names, contact info) so transcripted recognitions and digital badges (if applicable) remain verifiable over time.

Verification of microcredential completion and award

Importance

A defensible verification step ensures the learner actually met defined outcomes, protecting the institution's reputation and employer confidence.

Clear, verified completions make it possible to transcript, badge, convert non-credit to credit, and articulate across departments or institutions.

Documented verification reduces fraud, supports FERPA and accreditation expectations, and provides an audit trail for funding or regulatory reviews.

Recommended practices

Define who verifies completion (faculty, program deans, registrar) and how (LMS rubric, exam, portfolio, external assessment).

Separate the different stages of microcredential awarding (e.g., eligible → verified → awarded → published (badge/transcript) with audit trails.

Automate triggers where possible to identify potential completers.

Allow controlled manual overrides with reason codes for auditability.

Consider institutional access to historical records long-term for legal, academic, and operational continuity; transcripts, audits, funding reports, and transfer/PLA decisions depend on verifiable past awards.

Transcript notation support

Importance

Receiving departments and other institutions rely on transcripts to make articulation, PLA, and equivalency decisions. Transcripted microcredentials move more easily across programs (e.g., non-credit → credit) and institutions.

Degree audit and advising systems can "see" transcripted achievements, enabling stackable pathways, prerequisite waivers, and milestone tracking toward certificates and degrees.

Badging platforms can change; transcripts persist. Notation ensures long-term verification even if a third-party system is retired.

Recommended practices

If the microcredential confers academic recognition or stackable credit, transcript notation is recommended.

Issue digital badges when you need employer-facing, verifiable metadata and evidence links.

Reporting and reporting customization

Recommended practices

Map internal/external use cases, document available standard reports, and define the scope for custom reporting.

Evaluate institutional staff expertise and proficiency with the system.

Consider opportunities to partner with peer users to exchange templates, code, and reporting approaches.

Ease of learner self-enroll

Recommended practices

Choose the registration path that best fits the population who is being served.

Easy entry shortens the path from interest → enrollment → completion → award, improving process and timeliness metrics.

A well-designed self-enroll flow ties each attempt to the authoritative student identity, preventing duplicates and enabling transcript/badge issuance and transfer/PLA decisions.

Review processes for student registration for credit/fee handling, prerequisites, identity proofing, and FERPA alignment.

Establish clear eligibility rules, automated confirmations, and easy re-entry for returning learners.

Transfer and credit equivalency support (within and across institutions)

Recommended practices

Publish clear learning outcomes mapped to frameworks/competencies.

Record credit equivalency (or contact hours) and assessment level to support PLA/articulation.

Maintain a course/credential equivalency table for internal transfers (non-credit → credit) and to share with partner institutions.

For external portability, ensure verifiable artifacts (e.g., badge verification URL) and registrar-validated documents when transcripted.

Cost and resourcing

Recommended practices

Estimate one-time implementation costs (procurement, integrations, data migration/clean-up, training) and recurring fees (licensing/subscription per user/learner/credential, hosting, support).

Budget for reporting needs. Distinguish built-in vs. custom reports. Consider additional cost for a vendor if customized reports need to be built.

Evaluate the institutional staffing resources to operate and maintain the system as well as monitor any data security issues. Additional training or additional staff may be required for effective implementation.

Advancing Institutional Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance for Microcredentials in West Virginia

A Toolkit for Creating and Offering Microcredentials

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:

1. Transcription and Data Management
2. Institutional Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance
3. 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 2: Institutional Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance. This report also highlights suggested components necessary to implement microcredentials at individual institutions.

Co-led by Dr. Beez Schell (WVHEPC/CTCS), Dr. Jason Best (Shepherd University), Dr. Angela Hawk (West Virginia Northern Community College), Dr. Brandon Mills (New River Community and Technical College), and Dr. Amanda Sauchuck (Concord University), this group was charged with exploring how institutions can scale microcredential offerings with both urgency and integrity. The focus: ensuring that microcredentials developed in West Virginia are high-quality, transparent, aligned with workforce needs, and implemented through sound institutional processes.

Guided by questions such as *"How do we create microcredentials at scale and with deliberate speed?"* and *"How do we know when a microcredential meets minimum thresholds for quality and trustworthiness?"*, the team examined national frameworks, institutional practices, and emerging quality standards to create a set of resources for West Virginia institutions.

This report is organized into the following sections:

Section 1: Definitions of microcredentials, digital badges, and related terms to ensure clarity and shared understanding.

Section 2: WV Quality Framework that outlines key dimensions for microcredential development and approval based on both national best-practices and the specific needs of West Virginia learners and employers.

Section 3: Proposed HEPC Policy - Series 11 - for Approving Microcredentials outlines the approval process, in policy, for microcredentials, emphasizing that internal governance is sufficient, with no external approvals required, and provides guidance on submitting documentation to WVHEPC using the recommended (or adapted) Quality Framework template.

Section 4: Flowchart of the Microcredential Approval Process outlines the key stages of microcredential development, including idea generation, program design, institutional review, final approval, and submission to the WV Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC).

Section 5: "Microcredential Curriculum Proposal Form" - Template (Based on WV Quality Framework) is designed for use by institutional curriculum and governance bodies to develop, review, and approve microcredentials.

Section 6: Additional Suggestions to help institutions navigate microcredential creation, oversight, and policy.

SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

This section offers a common vocabulary for the key terms that define West Virginia's approach to microcredentials. The definitions were first developed using national and state-level resources and then refined through feedback from a broad group of stakeholders.

Refer to these definitions when in the process of creating or designing new microcredentials to ensure alignment with West Virginia's statewide framework and to determine how to follow the recommended approval process.

Digital Badge: A digital badge is a digital symbol that affirms acquired competence in a specific skill or area of knowledge. The digital symbol includes embedded metadata that verifies the issuer, outlines the earning criteria, and provides evidence of achievement, making it a credible and shareable record of learning. Each institution sets its own criteria for awarding digital badges to students for either credit or non-credit experiences.
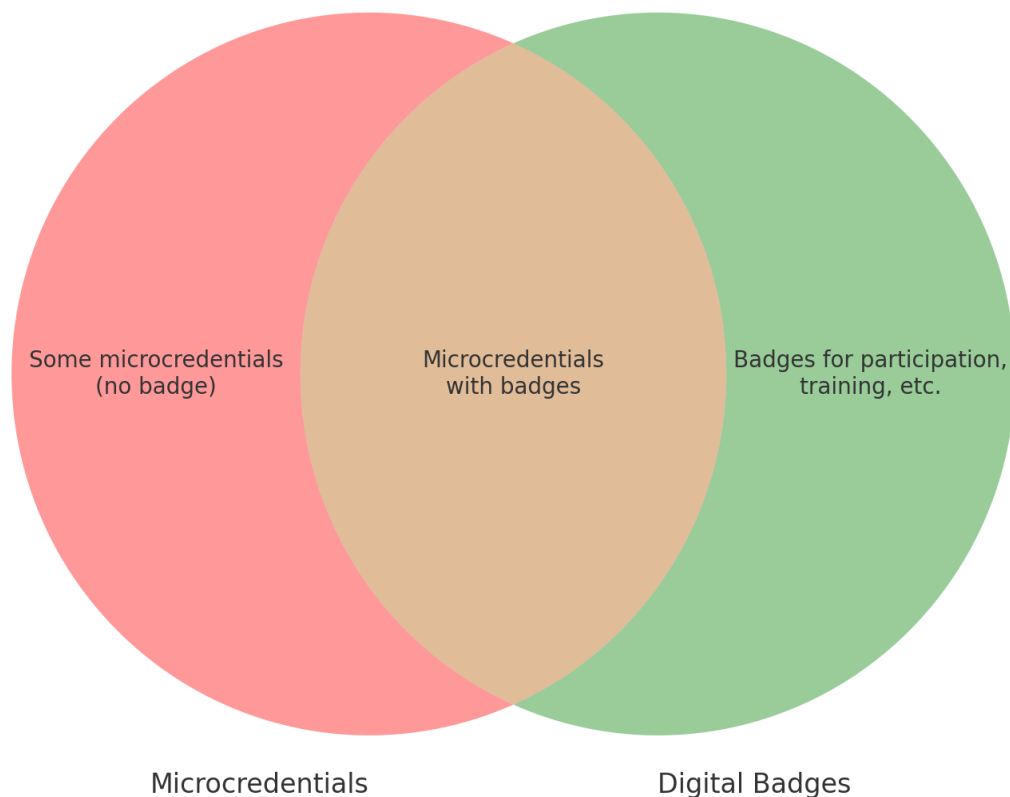
"Micro-credential" (current Series 59 definition) is a short, focused credential designed to provide in-demand skills, knowledge, and experience. Micro-credentials may be earned through a course or short series of courses that culminate in a "digital badge," which offers verified proof of competency and documentation of specific skills gained through the coursework, which is assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria.

[Proposed revised definition to update Series 59 and add to Series 11]

A **microcredential** is a short, focused academic award designed to provide in-demand skills, knowledge, and experience that can enhance a student's employability. Microcredentials may be earned through a short series of courses, a combination of courses and work-based learning, or through verified proof of competency and documentation of specific skills gained, which is assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. All microcredentials, whether offered for-credit or non-credit, must be aligned with the statewide Quality Framework for Microcredentials, including guidance on credit-hour equivalency where applicable.

Relationship Between Microcredentials and Digital Badges

Some microcredentials (no badge)

Microcredentials with badges

Badges for participation, training, etc.

Microcredentials

Digital Badges

Stackable Credential: A stackable credential is part of a sequence of academic or workforce-focused achievements that build upon one another. Each credential within the stack provides a discrete, measurable set of competencies that align with industry or academic standards and that move an individual along a career pathway or up a career ladder. Stackable credentials may lead to an associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree.

WV Quality Framework: The quality framework outlines the essential elements that make microcredentials meaningful and valuable to learners in West Virginia, ensuring they are academically robust, industry-aligned, workforce-driven, accessible, stackable, portable, and transparent. Microcredentials must be designed to address the following principles:

- Academic Quality
- Industry Alignment
- Workforce Demand, Economic and Social Mobility
- Accessibility
- Stackability
- Portability and Recognition
- Transparency

SECTION 2: WV QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The WV Quality Framework was developed by synthesizing national models (including those from SUNY, Colorado, and the National Skills Coalition) with West Virginia's higher education priorities around workforce alignment, accessibility, and learner mobility.

This quality framework outlines the essential elements that make microcredentials meaningful and valuable to learners in West Virginia, ensuring they are academically robust, industry-aligned, workforce-driven, accessible, stackable, portable, and transparent. Microcredentials must be designed to address the following principles:

Credentials should provide a meaningful return on a learner's investment of time and money. While "value" may look different for each individual, it should ultimately open doors—whether to better jobs, higher salaries, opportunities for advancement, or further education—and foster a sense of personal growth and accomplishment. Credentials of value support economic, social, and personal mobility, and can stand alone or combine with other credentials and work experience to create clear, rewarding pathways forward.

WV Quality Framework Principles:

1. Academic Quality

Similar to undergraduate degrees, microcredentials must be designed to uphold high academic standards, ensuring that learning outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and assessed appropriately. Institutions must establish quality assurance processes like those used for traditional credentials. Course content and assessments must be designed using evidence-based instructional strategies and aligned with recognized frameworks for skill development.

2. Industry Alignment

Microcredentials must be developed in collaboration with industry partners to ensure they address workforce needs and equip learners with relevant, applicable skills. They must reflect current and emerging trends in various industries and professional fields. This alignment increases the value of microcredentials for employers, ensuring that individuals who earn them are job-ready and competitive in the labor market.

If a direct industry partnership is not currently in place, the microcredential must be designed to align with widely recognized industry standards, skills frameworks, professional certifications, or employer-identified competencies. The credential must be designed to prepare learners with relevant, transferable skills valued by employers, and, if applicable, include plans for developing future industry partnerships to enhance ongoing alignment.

3. Workforce Demand, Economic and Social Mobility

Microcredentials must be designed to support economic mobility by targeting in-demand and growing industries in West Virginia, or provide general skill sets in demand in a variety of industries and professional roles. Labor market data, employer feedback, student demand, and workforce projections must inform their development to ensure that learners gain skills that lead to enhanced employment opportunities. Given West Virginia's broad population needs, microcredentials must be designed to support individuals looking to enter the workforce, advance in their current careers, or transition to new industries.

4. Accessibility

West Virginia's microcredentials must be designed to meet the needs of learners from various backgrounds, including working adults, veterans, rural populations, and those facing financial or time constraints. Ideally, these programs will be designed to offer flexible learning options, including online and hybrid formats, to accommodate non-traditional learners.

5. Stackability

Microcredentials are expected to provide both immediate value and opportunities for continued education. When possible, they must be designed to "stack" into larger credentials, such as certificates or degrees, allowing learners to build their skills progressively. If not stackable, the institution should explain why and describe how the microcredential still offers meaningful standalone value or has the potential to be stacked in the future.

6. Portability and Recognition

Microcredentials must be designed to have value beyond the issuing institution, meaning they can be recognized by multiple educational institutions, employers, and industry organizations. This requires collaboration across sectors to develop shared standards and transferable credentials.

7. Transparency

Institutions must provide detailed descriptions of the skills and competencies demonstrated, the criteria used to assess proficiency, and any alignment with industry standards or certifications. They should also clearly indicate whether and how the credential transfers or articulates to other academic programs at the institution or at another institution. Transparency ensures that earners understand the credential's value and that employers can confidently evaluate its relevance.

SECTION 3: PROPOSED HEPC/CTCS POLICY FOR APPROVAL OF MICROCREDENTIALS

[Proposed language for Series 11]:

The president or designee shall provide final approval for each new microcredential at the institutional level after the institution completes its established curriculum review process; no external approvals (e.g., Council or accreditor) are required. Upon final approval, the institution must submit a Microcredential Inventory Form (see section 5) to the Council for inclusion in the statewide Microcredential Inventory.
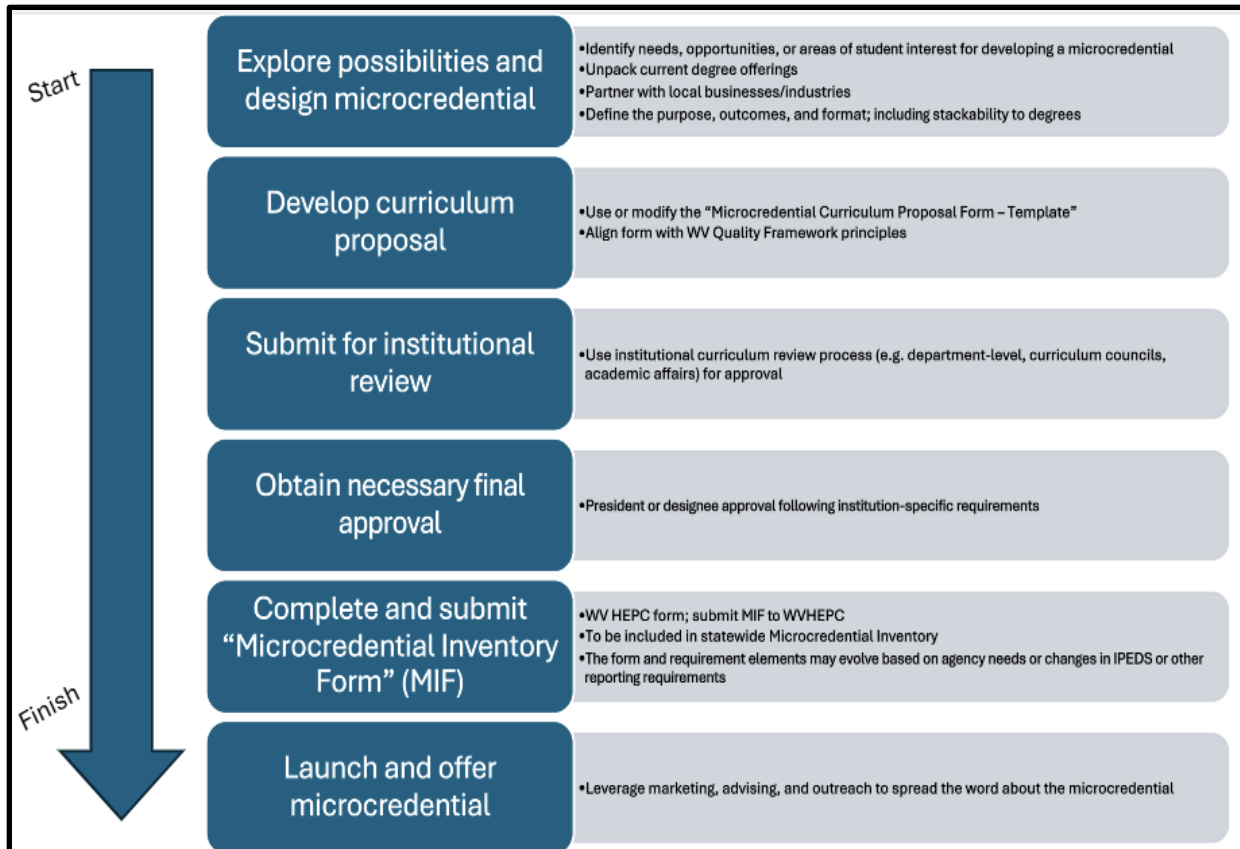
While use of the WV Quality Framework template is encouraged, institutions may adapt the template to meet internal requirements if all seven core principles are addressed. Before launching any microcredentials, institutions must submit their intended template to WVHEPC for review and to be kept on file.

Credential Type	Definition	Credit / Hour Range	Relationship
Microcredential	Short, focused academic award providing in-demand skills, knowledge, and experience. May be earned through courses, work-based learning, or verified competency against clear criteria. Credit or non-credit, with credit-hour equivalency guidance.	Flexible; credit and non-credit	Serves as the **umbrella definition**. Skill Sets and Advanced Skill Sets that meet the Quality Framework are recognized as microcredentials.
Skill Set Certificate	Series of courses or competencies preparing individuals for a specific skill.	Fewer than **12 credit hours** (or non-credit equivalent)	Considered **equivalent to microcredentials** under Credential WV.
Advanced Skill Set Certificate	Series of courses or competencies preparing individuals for more advanced skills.	**12–29 credit hours** (or non-credit equivalent)	Considered **equivalent to microcredentials** under Credential WV.

Notes on Existing Skill Sets

- All *skill sets* or *advanced skill sets* offered by community and technical colleges can be recognized as micro credentials provided they meet the Credential WV Quality Framework criteria. These programs will be formally recognized and included in the statewide Microcredential Inventory. This approach ensures that the work already underway at institutions is honored and provides a clear pathway for integrating existing offerings into the Credential WV framework.

- The current definition of skill sets and advanced skill sets are considered equivalent to the proposed definition of microcredentials in the Credential WV Quality Framework. This alignment will be reflected in Series 11, and future discussions will determine whether *microcredential* should replace the terms *skill sets* and *advanced skill sets* to ensure consistency across the system and alignment with national standards.

SECTION 4: FLOWCHART OUTLINING MICROCREDENTIAL APPROVAL PROCESS: DESIGN TO LAUNCH

STEPS:

1. **Explore & design the microcredential**
   Begin by identifying opportunities for a new microcredential through conversations with faculty, students, industry partners, and workforce stakeholders. This may include unpacking existing degree or certificate programs, identifying in-demand skills, or responding to regional workforce needs. Consider industry certifications and other third-party awards and how these can be combined with academic experiences to create new microcredentials.

2. **Develop curriculum proposal using your institution's "Microcredential Curriculum Proposal Form" or other document that aligns with WV Quality Framework principles)**
    Draft a microcredential proposal that includes outlining learning outcomes, assessment methods, alignment to workforce and learner needs, and how it meets the WV Quality Framework (or adapted template with all seven principles).

3. **Submit for institutional review**
    Submit the microcredential proposal through your institution's internal curriculum governance structure for review (e.g., department-level committees, curriculum councils, academic affairs).

4. **Obtain final approval**
    Once approved through internal governance and review processes, obtain final approval from the designated institutional agent. No HEPC or accreditor approval is required.

5. **Complete and submit the "Microcredential Inventory Form" to HEPC**
    After institutional approval, fill out and submit the Microcredential Inventory Form so the credential can be included in the statewide Microcredential Inventory.

6. **Launch & offer the microcredential**
    With all approvals and documentation complete, the microcredential may now be offered to students.

SECTION 5: MICROCREDENTIAL CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM (TEMPLATE BASED ON WV QUALITY FRAMEWORK)

This microcredential curriculum proposal form template is intended to be a guide for submitting proposals for new microcredentials to undergo the institution's vetting and approval process. The template may be modified to fit the specific needs and governance structures of each institution.

Items in red are required, as they will be reported to the HEPC through the Microcredential Inventory Form.

Section 1: General Information

- **Institution name:**
- Department/Division:
- **Primary Contact (Name & Title):**
- **Email:**
- **Phone:**
- **Proposed Micro-Credential Title:**
- **CIP Code:**
- **Total Credit Hours:**
    - **Or Contact hours**
- **Undergraduate or graduate**
- **Is this a stackable microcredential at your institution? Y/N**
- **HEAPS eligible (CTCs) only**
- **Credit or Non-Credit**
    - **If non-credit, what is the credit equivalency?**
- Modality – online, F2F, hybrid
- Proposed Launch Date:
- Overview of the microcredential: *Provide a summary of the microcredential, including its purpose, target audience, and the skills or competencies learners will acquire*

Section 2: Microcredential Proposal Narrative

1. Academic Integrity Criteria

- Clearly state measurable learning outcomes of the microcredential
- Assessment: Describe how the outcomes will be assessed.
- Summarize the instructional strategies and curriculum design approach.

2. Industry Alignment

- If applicable, identify the specific industry partners consulted during development.
- Describe how the microcredential addresses specific workforce needs or professional skills.
    - If there is not a specific industry alignment, map knowledge, skills, and abilities outcomes to specific industry skills
- Provide evidence (LMI data, Program Advisory Board minutes, etc.) of relevance to current or emerging industry trends.

(Attach letters of support or statements from industry partners, if available)

3. Workforce Demand, Economic and Social Mobility

- Provide labor market data, employer feedback, or workforce projections supporting the need for this microcredential.
- Explain how the microcredential will support employment opportunities or career advancement, particularly in West Virginia's economic context.
- Will this impact the wages of the employee? If yes, how so?

(Attach data or employer feedback, if available)

4. Accessibility

- Describe how the microcredential will be accessible to a variety of learner populations (e.g., working adults, rural learners, veterans).
- Outline the delivery methods and scheduling options.

5. Stackability

- Describe how the microcredential fits within a broader academic or workforce pathway.
- Identify whether the microcredential can stack into an existing certificate, degree, or other credential.
- If a standalone credential, explain any plan for future stackability or reasons why stackability is unnecessary in this instance

(Include a diagram or pathway map, if applicable)

6. Portability and Recognition

- Explain how the microcredential will be recognized beyond the institution (e.g., by employers, professional associations, other institutions; transcript, LER, digital badge, etc.)
- Provide information about the digital badge metadata (skills, competencies, issuing authority).
- Describe any partnerships or collaborations supporting portability.

7. Transparency

- Describe how information about the microcredential (learning outcomes, assessment methods, industry alignment) will be made accessible to learners and external stakeholders.
- Indicate where this information will be published (e.g., course catalog, website, digital badge metadata, Microcredential Inventory).
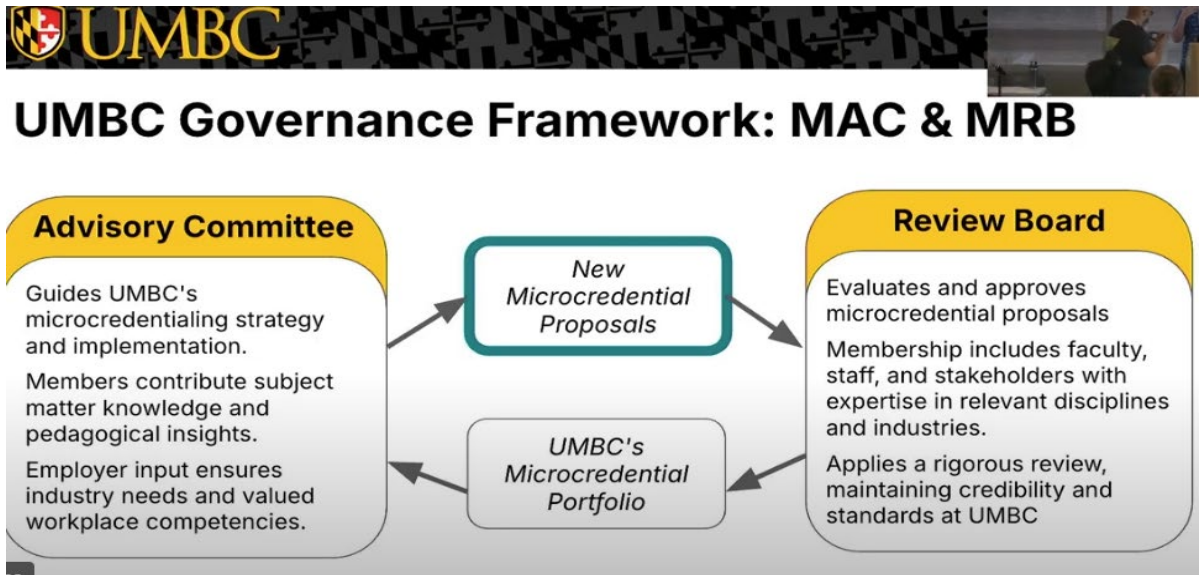
Section 3: Required Attachments

- Sample syllabus or course outline
- Curriculum map showing alignment of learning outcomes and assessments
- Letters of support from industry partners (if applicable)
- Labor market data or employer feedback (if applicable)
- Pathway diagram (if stackable)

Section 4: Approvals (institutional process) – must include signature of institutional president or designee

Once approved at the institution, complete the Microcredential Inventory Form and send to HEPC/CTCS

SECTION 6: ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1) Consider creating a microcredential advisory committee and review board. For example from the University of Maryland Baltimore County:

2) Consider a "short form curriculum proposal" to generate ideas and seek input before completing the formal curriculum proposal form.

3) Consider a "microcredential evaluation rubric" (based on the WV Quality Framework) to score proposals for microcredentials. Refer to Quality Matters, 1EdTech Trusted Credential Framework, or your own AI tool.

4) Invite workforce partners to participate in reviewing microcredential proposals to ensure the credentials align with current industry needs, meet employer expectations, and prepare learners with skills that are relevant and valued in the workplace.

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.

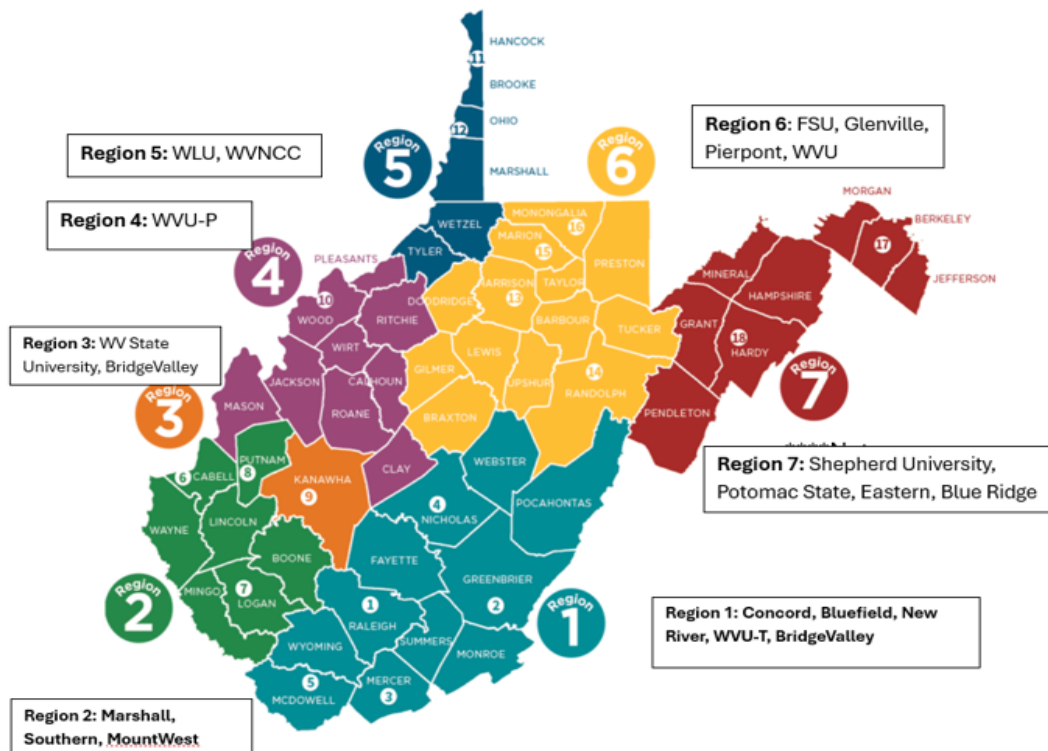| Credential WV Connect: Workforce Tour		
Region	**Hosting Institution**	**Event Date**
Region 1	New River Community and Technical College (Additional Hosts: Bluefield State University, Concord University, WVU-Tech)	9/9/2025
Region 2	Marshall University (Additional Hosts: Mountwest Community and Technical 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

Region 5: WLU, WVNCC

Region 4: WVU-P

Region 3: WV State University, BridgeValley

Region 2: Marshall, Southern, MountWest

Region 6: FSU, Glenville, Pierpont, WVU

Region 7: Shepherd University, Potomac State, Eastern, Blue Ridge

Region 1: Concord, Bluefield, New River, WVU-T, BridgeValley

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.

Credential WV Connect Acknowledgements

Advisors from WorkForce West Virginia

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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

credential
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College System**