

## Demonstrate Value through Linking Data

### *Workcred Certification Network*

**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

WebEx Meeting  
1:00 – 3:30 p.m. EST

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Karen Elzey, associate executive director of Workcred, opened the meeting, facilitated attendee introductions, and set the context for the meeting. She expressed her gratitude to the network members who were able to provide their input on the value of linking administrative data or any perceived issues through a series of interviews that Workcred conducted. She then provided an overview of the agenda and welcomed the guest speakers, Vanessa Brown from the National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) and Bob Sheets from the George Washington Institute of Public Policy (GWIPP).

#### **Recap of Interviews with Certification Bodies**

From the [interviews with network participants](#), Ms. Elzey categorized the value proposition of linking administrative data with the data from the Clearinghouse and the U.S. Census Bureau into five general areas: visibility, credibility, strategic planning, marketing, and career pathways. In addition, interviews touched on the barriers, types of reports from the Clearinghouse that would be the most helpful, as well as what tools Workcred and the Clearinghouse can develop to better assist in this process.

#### *Visibility*

The majority of certification bodies discussed the importance of increasing visibility and awareness of their certifications as well as to the occupations that are not that well understood by the public.

#### *Credibility*

There was a consensus that using third-party validated data not only provides evidence about the value of their certification but also brings more credibility to the certification bodies with the ability to demonstrate that hiring certified persons increases employee retention rates. Having the data to show this connection is key.

#### *Strategic Planning*

In addition to adding credibility, data can also be used to improve the strategic planning of their organizations, improve decision making, and educate different stakeholders such as policymakers, employers, government agencies, and certification users in marketing purposes.

### *Marketing*

Using data for targeted marketing can help identify gaps in certifications earned by underserved populations, show wage gains before and after earning a certification, and demonstrate how different certifications can work together towards career and credential pathways.

### *Career Pathways*

Lastly, the certification bodies that were interviewed said a great value to linking their data would be in better understanding of career pathways and earnings of their certificants. This would enable enhanced information on how people end up in a career, what other certifications they may have, and what people may be interested in pursuing their certification.

### *Barriers*

Many interviewees identified a lack of staff resources, board approval, and data security and privacy regulations as barriers that can undermine a certification body's ability to even collect data, much less link it to external sources such as the Clearinghouse. Due to resource constraints, certification bodies expressed a preference that the technology systems be automated to facilitate sharing data with the Clearinghouse. In addition, some certification bodies have to demonstrate the value or return on investment (ROI) to their board as well as educate them on concerns around data privacy before being able to move forward. And many organizations may have to amend or change their internal policies to ensure data privacy.

### *Reports*

When asked about the types of reports from the Clearinghouse that would make the working relationship more valuable, responses included education attainment data; relationships to other credentials; comparison data; trends in credentials and career pathways; demographic trends; employment and wage data; and retention and promotion data.

### *Tools*

The following tools were identified by certification bodies during the interviews as being helpful in moving forward in their data linking efforts: infographics; a checklist of required and preferred data elements; a presentation or document outlining the information for use in seeking approval from a board of directors; information on compliance to accreditation standards; sample data reports; examples of opt-in language; success stories of how others are linking their data; and the value proposition and benefits to different stakeholders, especially certification holders and employers. Certification bodies also asked for more specifics on how the collected data will be used.

As a result, Workcred and the Clearinghouse have developed [an infographic](#) that shows where the data sets come from, how they can be linked, and how they can work together to provide better insights. Additionally, Workcred created [guidelines](#) for linking data that provides a checklist of the data elements that can be matched. The Clearinghouse also shared a [sample agreement](#) for linking certification data with their data. The developed tools and other resources can be found in the [Network's tools and resources folder](#), and Workcred and the Clearinghouse will begin developing some of the other tools that were suggested for use by certification bodies.

## Value of Administrative Data and Data Initiatives

Bob Sheets, research professor at the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, provided an overview of different types of administrative data, including data from employer human resource (HR) systems, unemployment insurance wage records, and IRS tax records. The data from the HR systems are given to the government for program administration and tax services and then could be used for a variety of applications, such as linking to education records for employment earnings. Dr. Sheets mentioned that there has been increasing use of administrative data at the federal and state level as well as an increase of expectations in the certification community to show employment and earnings outcomes of different types of credentials. However, there are some limitations at the state level since the data does not capture information for people who move out of state or transfer to another institution.

Because of the growing use of and demand for administrative data, there are now a variety of initiatives to improve data quality, provide better data access, and expand data utilization. Dr. Sheets pointed out that it is important for the certification community to agree on how to improve data collection, data quality, and making the data more accessible. Dr. Sheets suggested that Workcred and the Clearinghouse could engage the certification community in further discussions about how administrative data could be used to answer questions about annual earnings, employment, and retention.

Dr. Sheets then spoke about his role working with the T3 Innovation Network, and JDX, working groups of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, to develop a more extensive standard on job descriptions and postings that will also include credentialing and competency requirements. In addition, the HR Open Standards Consortium now leads an initiative with the goal of helping employers better articulate their competency, credential, and privacy requirements. The consortium will also ensure that the employment earning records and workforce analytics are accessible for employers to use through open competency frameworks, which can help them make better decisions about retention. In similar fashion, the new concept of learning and employment records (LERs) can also be used by employers in the hiring process as it would not only include typical resume experience, but also validated skill sets and how they were achieved. Based on feedback from attendees, there is a need for a common language to describe competency and credentialing requirements to avoid confusion and inaccurate job descriptions and postings stemming from issues with data quality.

## Creating Data Benchmarks and Disseminating them to Broader Audiences

Isabel Cardenas-Navia, Workcred's senior director of research, and Roy Swift, executive director at Workcred, led a discussion on the benchmarks for sharing and linking data. Dr. Cardenas-Navia briefly reviewed the guidelines for collecting data document [as linked on page 2] that Workcred developed to help certification bodies understand what data they are currently collecting and what they can or should collect. Dr. Swift stated that 36 million Americans in the Clearinghouse database who entered a secondary education program did not complete and now are without credentials.<sup>1</sup> He emphasized that being able to use data to show the value of credentials and the best pathway to a credential is essential

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<sup>1</sup> See "Some College, No Degree" report: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/some-college-no-degree-2019/>.

to help people achieve economic mobility as well as mitigate the equity gap. Additionally, credentialing data can have important impacts on policy and funding, in one way by providing evidence of why the cost of certification should be considered as part of programs that embed certifications into degree programs. Dr. Swift ended by advocating for the creation of a standard – formal or informal – around credential data elements and collection requirements, and even branching out to other audiences and conferences to start these types of discussions and begin to the importance of this data. As a result, Workcred will develop a proposal to submit for the November 2021 Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) conference. If anyone is interested in being involved, please let Karen Elzey ([kelzey@workcred.org](mailto:kelzey@workcred.org)) know.

### **New Data Insights**

Vanessa Brown, deputy chief data officer with the Clearinghouse, shared [an update of the results](#) from the [Industry Certification and Education Performance Data System project](#), which shows sample data from the pilot project with the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)/Manufacturing Institute (MI). The data included information on employment in the manufacturing industry before and after last credential, as well as average wages since last credential by gender and race/ethnicity. The results also show the probability of employment in manufacturing by gender and race/ethnicity, including credential holders who decided not to follow a career pathway in manufacturing.

Next steps for the pilot project include working with the U.S. Census Bureau to analyze geographical impacts of wages, understand types and sizes of employers, assess retention over time, define a control group of people with and without credentials, explore demographic trends related to race/ethnicity and gender, and release a paper on the pilot findings. In addition, the matching algorithms to the U.S. Census Bureau and IRS data sources are now programmed and can be quickly used for other industry credential providers. If anyone is interested, Ms. Brown can provide more information on these results or other aspects of the project. Dr. Swift proposed and the attendees agreed to develop a survey to prioritize the top research outcomes of what is most important to certification bodies, to share with the Clearinghouse and better inform the types of reports they can produce for the network.

### **Engaging with Credential Engine**

Ms. Elzey provided a [brief presentation](#) on how network members are engaging with Credential Engine, their Credential Registry, and app Credential Finder. As an overview, she mentioned the [recent report](#) from Credential Engine that states there are almost one million different types of credentials in the U.S., but only 8,000 that are labeled as certifications. Additionally, the popularity and increase of credentials make it more challenging to differentiate quality credentials from ineffective ones. Through her research, Ms. Elzey determined that 56 percent (20 organizations) of network members have information about their certifications or a subset of the certifications in Credential Finder. Out of those 20, 18 certification bodies have 101 certifications that are listed, but only 53 of those certifications include competencies.

Ms. Elzey then opened up the meeting to a discussion and asked attendees to consider the following questions:

- For those that have entered data into the Credential Registry, what were your reasons?
- What do you see as the value to your certification body?
- Have you updated your information since you initially added it?
- If you have not participated, what are the reasons that you have opted not to include your data?
- Are there barriers to entering data into the Credential Registry? If so, what are they?
- Whether you have or have not entered any data in the Credential Registry, have you ever used Credential Finder?

During the discussion that ensued, attendees shared their thoughts and experiences with Credential Engine and the Registry. Some reported that it is too time consuming or confusing to enter their data, some said they have added their credential information but have not remembered to provide any updates, and others mentioned that they see information on their certification in the Registry, but they were not the ones to put it on. Attendees all agreed that having their information on the Registry will be beneficial due to increased visibility (e.g., state departments of education) and reaching broader audiences (e.g., employers), but the quality assurance of the data, time constraints, the cumbersome user interface, and data maintenance issues were mentioned as areas that need to be improved before greater use.

Ms. Brown reported that the Clearinghouse is planning to build an application programming interface (API) to feed data to Credential Engine so certification bodies would not have to enter their data in two separate places. Dr. Swift added that many of the features mentioned have not yet been developed or are currently under development for future implementation. Attendees suggested having Credential Engine provide a tutorial to help all interested network members with the process of beginning to enter data or maintain the data that is currently entered.

### **Next Steps**

Ms. Elzey ended the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and insightful contributions to the discussion. The next meeting is scheduled on May 13, 2021, and further details will be shared in advance of the meeting.

## Meeting Attendance – February 25, 2021

Network Member Organization Name	Representative First Name	Representative Last Name
American Council on Exercise	Brian	Greenlee
American Health Information Management Association	Patrick	Irwin
American Health Information Management Association	Gina	Sanvik
American Nurses Credentialing Center	Diane	Thompkins
American Roads and Transportation Builders Association	Beth	Stinson
American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification	Patricia	Tanabe
Association for Supply Chain Management	Mark	Imfield
Behavior Analyst Certification Board	Misty	Bloom
Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Marya	Ryan
Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Rob	Leonard
Building Performance Institute, Inc.	Nancy	Kaplan
Certified Fund Raising Executive International	Jeff	Stanger
Commission for Case Manager Certification	MaryBeth	Kurland
CompTIA	Carl	Bowman
EC-Council	Wesley	Alvarez
Human Resource Certification Institute	Lisa	Seyfried
International Association of Privacy Professionals	Susan	Tierney
International Association of Privacy Professionals	Doug	Forman
International Board of Heart Rhythm Examiners	Tracy	Lofty
International Board of Specialty Certification	David	Bump
International Facility Management Association	Cathy	Pavick
International Information System Security Certification Consortium, Inc. (ISC <sup>2</sup> )	Bhaskar	Dawadi
National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators	Bob	Mahlman
National Environmental Health Association	Rance	Baker
National Environmental Health Association	Sarah	Hoover
National Healthcareer Association	Jessica	Langley-Loop
National Inspection Testing and Certification, Corp.	Laura	Braeunig
National Restaurant Association/National Registry of Food Safety Professionals	Larry	Lynch
National Retail Federation	Kate	Fessler
Project Management Institute	John	Kleine
Project Management Institute	Ashley	Forsyth
Society for Human Resource Management	Nancy	Woolever
Society of Certified Senior Advisors	Ann	Witherspoon
Society of Certified Senior Advisors	Christine	Niero
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
American Welding Society	Denny	Smith
George Washington Institute of Public Policy	Bob	Sheets
George Washington Institute of Public Policy	Holly	Zanville
Institute of Credentialing Excellence	Denise	Roosendaal
ICE/NCCA	Linda	Anguish
Lumina Foundation	Frank	Essien
National Student Clearinghouse	Vanessa	Brown

National Student Clearinghouse	Simi	Bal
Formerly of NRF	Shana	Treger
Whiteford Taylor & Preston, LLP	Mark	Franco

## Meeting Agenda *Demonstrating Value through Linking Data*

**February 25, 2021**  
 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EST

[JOIN WEBEX MEETING](#)

Meeting number (access code): 172 369 0015; Meeting password: Km9RkaFJW29

Phone: 1-866-469-3239

<p><b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</b>          (1:00-1:15 p.m.)</p> <p>Karen Elzey will open and set the context for the meeting and take attendance.</p>	<p><b>Karen Elzey</b>          Associate Executive Director,          Workcred</p>
<p><b>RECAP OF INTERVIEWS WITH CERTIFICATION BODIES</b>          (1:15-1:45 p.m.)</p> <p>Karen Elzey will provide a summary of the information gleaned from the interviews with some Network members. In response to the interviews, Karen Elzey and Vanessa Brown will lead a discussion about some of the tools that have been developed to help certification bodies make a decision about getting involved in data linking efforts.</p>	<p><b>Karen Elzey</b></p> <p><b>Vanessa Brown</b>          Deputy Chief Data Officer,          National Student          Clearinghouse</p>
<p><b>VALUE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA AND DATA INITIATIVES</b>          (1:45-2:15 p.m.)</p> <p>Bob Sheets will lead a conversation about the value and importance of administrative data at both the state and federal level, and the benefit that individual organizations can gain from using this data. In addition, he will share information about several data initiatives that he is involved with that are relevant to the certification community.</p>	<p><b>Bob Sheets</b>          Research Professor, George          Washington Institute of Public          Policy</p>
<p><b>CREATING DATA BENCHMARKS AND DISSEMINATING THEM TO BROADER AUDIENCES</b>          (2:15-2:45 p.m.)</p> <p>Isabel Cardenas-Navia and Roy Swift will lead participants through a discussion of the core and ideal data benchmarks. The discussion will also focus on strategies to build a community of certification bodies who publicly show leadership around the importance and value of data collection and linking efforts.</p>	<p><b>Isabel Cardenas-Navia</b>          Director of Research, Workcred</p> <p><b>Roy Swift</b>          Executive Director, Workcred</p>
<p><b>NEW DATA INSIGHTS</b>          (2:45-3:00 p.m.)</p> <p>Vanessa Brown will highlight new insights that have been gathered recently from linking certification, education, and wage data.</p>	<p><b>Vanessa Brown</b></p>
<p><b>ENGAGING WITH CREDENTIAL ENGINE</b>          (3:00-3:20 p.m.)</p>	<p><b>Karen Elzey</b></p>



<p>Karen Elzey will facilitate a discussion about the information Network members have shared with Credential Engine, focusing on the reasons that Network members have or have not provided data to Credential Engine’s Credential Registry, and the value proposition for certification bodies to engage with Credential Engine.</p>	
<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b> (3:20-3:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Karen Elzey will discuss the next steps and future activities of the Network, and bring the meeting to a close.</p>	<p><b>Karen Elzey</b></p>
<p><b>ADJOURNMENT</b> (3:30 p.m.)</p>	<p><b>Karen Elzey</b></p>