Demonstrate Value through Linking Data

Workcred Certification Network

Wednesday, September 29, 2021
WebEx Meeting
1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EDT

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

Karen Elzey, associate executive director of Workcred, opened the meeting and welcomed all network members and attendees. She then provided an overview of the agenda, a recap of recent network activities, and introduced the first meeting topic for representatives from the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) to share their experiences about forming a partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse).

Highlights of a Certification Body's Experience Entering into an Agreement with the National Student Clearinghouse

Rob Leonard, senior project specialist with BCSP, began the discussion by sharing news that BCSP has finalized their pilot data sharing agreement with the Clearinghouse. Through his [presentation](), Mr. Leonard walked attendees through the process they went through to get to a finalized agreement, which included determining the benefits of working with the Clearinghouse, identifying the blind spots, and clarifying how the partnership would be formed. The current information that BCSP has on their certificants is voluntarily provided and updated by the certificants themselves. So, a lot of information about educational backgrounds or career pathways after obtaining the certification may be missing, and thus led to the decision to move forward with the Clearinghouse.

Originally, when the process began for BCSP in 2019, the Clearinghouse's agreement was primarily focused on educational institutions and did not fit the needs of a certification body. Additionally, there were concerns around how this partnership would affect meeting or maintaining BCSP's accreditation requirements and what type of data could be provided to the Clearinghouse. Mr. Leonard also noted that most certification bodies are not familiar with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) data privacy laws for students, but do adhere to other privacy requirements such as those that are part of the accreditation process, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, and state laws. BCSP wanted to ensure all privacy and security measures were met through the partnership. All of these concerns and considerations were addressed and clarified through revisions to [the agreement]() with the Clearinghouse.

Throughout the process, BSCP worked with the Clearinghouse to:

- Create a tiered list of what data is required and optional to collect to meet the Clearinghouse parameters;
- Create rules about what data provided by the Clearinghouse that other organizations could see;
- Clarify differences between BSCP and the Clearinghouse for certification statuses, renewal verses annual fees, and exam scores or pass/fail determinations;
- Map and code certification data, including racial, ethnicity, and gender data, to the data in the Clearinghouse's database;
- Conduct an on-site security audit of the Clearinghouse's data systems;
- Strengthen disclosure language to protect personally identifiable information (PII);
- Make updates to their privacy policy on their website, including the addition of an opt-out choice, which ensures that the collected information will not be sold but only used for research purposes unless new or current certification holders opt-out;
- Strengthen protocols to include a 30-day limit for reporting data breaches; and
- Help to develop tools that prevent the inclusion of incorrect data due to certification status changes (e.g., renewals, expirations, etc.).

Following the presentation, Christy Uden, chief executive officer of BCSP, pointed out that a lot of the groundwork and procedures for certification bodies have now been developed through this pilot work, making it easier for others to work with the Clearinghouse. Vanessa Brown, the Clearinghouse's deputy chief data officer, reiterated that there is a lot of flexibility built into this model for certification bodies when it comes to data sharing and privacy, and Roy Swift, executive director of Workcred, stressed how important this data mapping will be not only for certifications bodies, but also governments, funders, and even employers.

As of the time of the meeting, BCSP initiated their first transfer to the Clearinghouse of data on all certifications within the last five years. Ms. Elzey congratulated BCSP on this accomplishment, thanked them for sharing their experiences as the first certification body in this initiative, and encouraged all network members to continue to consider participating in these important data-linking efforts with the Clearinghouse.

Review Draft Resources for Certification Bodies

During this part of the meeting, Ms. Elzey shared drafts of the tools and resources that were developed to highlight the value of linking data and help certification bodies obtain the necessary approvals to begin working with the Clearinghouse. As a reminder, these resources were developed as a result of a series of interviews conducted earlier in 2021 to uncover the benefits and challenges to certification bodies with linking data, and will continue to be updated based on network input and new information. These resources include:

- A customizable PowerPoint template that outlines and consolidates the project goals and background; the value propositions, risks, challenges and solutions; early outcomes from the Clearinghouse pilot; and the process to participate, including negotiating the agreement, assessing the process to pull minimum and historical data, setting up secure file transfer protocol, submitting test data, and receiving aggregate data to review;

- [Case studies for certification bodies](#);
- [Guidelines for linking data](#);
- [Impact on accreditation](#);
- [Process to participate](#) with the Clearinghouse;
- [Value propositions](#);
- Updated [Industry Credentials Initiative FAQs](#) that provides more comprehensive information to certification bodies; and
- Previously shared Industry Credentials Initiative [white paper](#), the [file formatting guide](#), the [Industry Credentials flyer](#), and a [sample FERPA consent release form](#).

During the discussion that ensued, network members discussed their input and feedback to these resources. Specifically, attendees expressed their desire for the PowerPoint template to include some notes and other explanations that presenters can use to guide their discussions and a section on benefits to the learners. There is a learner portal developed by the Clearinghouse that will give students more control of their credentials to see connected pathway information and better understand labor-market outcomes. As more data becomes available, the Clearinghouse can develop another case study to better determine the benefits to learners, and even for specific certifications or one on people who do not yet have a certification.

Ms. Brown then led attendees through a review of the case studies that were developed to show certification bodies the outcomes of data linking for three different areas. The first highlights how certifications bodies can use data insights to grow the certification business, particularly for certification bodies that offer multiple certifications that are beyond entry level. She outlined the two certification pathway outcomes included in this case study – one from NIMS and the other from the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) – that show the value and significant increase in wages for credential holders that decided to pursue other credentials. In particular, the MSSC example highlights the opportunity to use aggregate labor-market information to market sequential certifications and help certificants continue on their career journey.

The second case study provides information about educational pathways. In addition to aggregate information, the Clearinghouse can also provide individual-level information if permission is provided. With that, certification bodies can see enrollment status, degree attainment, and other educational pathway information for certification holders. For employment data, the third case study shows how certification bodies can understand the value of their certifications through employment. Through the example used, a significant number of individuals who attained the referenced entry-level manufacturing certification did not end up entering the manufacturing industry. This data can help certification bodies understand the value of certification by industry or sub-industry, and shows where people are working in various industries.

In reviewing the other resources, members repeated concerns about how participation in this work may impact their accreditation status. Although the main accreditors (i.e., the ANSI National Accreditation Board and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies) require certification bodies to have documented policies and procedures for collecting and using information, individuals may provide

written consent to release their information to third parties after they are clearly aware that they can opt in or opt out from it. It was suggested that the document that explains impacts of accreditation should include other accreditors like the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification and the National Society of Professional Engineers. Ms. Brown mentioned that the Clearinghouse's legal department is always re-assessing their privacy policies in light of any changes or updates to data privacy laws, and will remove any data from their database if requested by anyone or as required by law.

Other feedback stemmed around the need to further explain the return on investment for participating that a board might ask, as well as the actual costs if any. Ms. Brown confirmed that there are no costs associated with implementation or maintenance as of now.

Next Steps

Next steps include revising the tools and resources as discussed during the meeting, and ongoing as needed. Access to the most up-to-date materials can be found through the links provided within the meeting summary and in the member site. In concluding the meeting, Ms. Elzey stated that Workcred staff will continue to have individual conversations with certification bodies to answer any questions and address any concerns about linking their data with the Clearinghouse. And as part of this project, Workcred is developing three issue briefs that focus on certifications, certificates, and the organizations that convene certification bodies. Workcred staff will be asking members of the network to review the drafts of these issue briefs and provide feedback.

Meeting Attendance – September 29, 2021

Network Member Organization Name	Representative First Name	Representative Last Name
American Board of Multiple Specialties in Podiatry	Steve	Permison
American Council on Exercise	Brian	Greenlee
American Health Information Management Association	Mike	Niederpruem
American Nurses Credentialing Center	Diane	Thompkins
American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification	Patricia	Tanabe
Association for Supply Chain Management	Mark	Imfeld
Behavior Analyst Certification Board	Misty	Bloom
Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Marya	Ryan
Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Rob	Leonard
Board of Certified Safety Professionals	Christy	Uden
Building Performance Institute, Inc.	Nancy	Kaplan
Certified Fund Raising Executive International	Jeff	Stanger
CompTIA	Carl	Bowman
Human Resource Certification Institute	Lisa	Seyfried
International Board of Heart Rhythm Examiners	Tracy	Lofty
International Board of Specialty Certification	David	Bump
International Facility Management Association	Cathy	Pavick
International Facility Management Association	Nick	Rocha
National Healthcare Association	Jessica	Langley-Loep
National Inspection Testing and Certification, Corp.	Laura	Braeunig
National Restaurant Association/National Registry of Food Safety Professionals	Larry	Lynch
National Retail Federation	Kate	Fessler
Pharmacy Technician Certification Board	Bill	Schimmel
Project Management Institute	Ashley	Forsyth
Society of Certified Senior Advisors	Ann	Witherspoon
Society of Certified Senior Advisors	Christine	Niero
Other Attendees		
George Washington Institute of Public Policy	Holly	Zanville
Institute of Credentialing Excellence	Denise	Roosendaal
Lumina Foundation	Kermit	Kaleba
Lumina Foundation	Frank	Essien
National Student Clearinghouse	Vanessa	Brown
Formerly of the National Retail Federation	Shana	Treger
Whiteford Taylor & Preston, LLP	Mark	Franco