A PRIMER ON ASSOCIATIONS FOR
CREDENTIALING PROFESSIONALS

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workcred
an affiliate of **ANSI**

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BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE BRIEF

This issue brief was developed by Workcred as part of its "Demonstrate Value Through Linking Data" project. One of the goals of the project was to address the continued confusion about the purpose and characteristics of certificates and certifications as well as provide an overview of organizations that convene credentialing bodies.

The following three issue briefs were developed:

» *Certification Myths Debunked* addresses five common myths about certifications.

» *The Role of Certificates in Signifying Knowledge and Skills Attainment* brings clarity to the different types of certificates with a particular emphasis on the role of assessment-based certificates and certificates of achievement.

» *A Primer on Associations for Credentialing Professionals* provides an overview of four organizations that bring together credentialing bodies that issue certifications and certificates outside of higher education institutions.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

From 2020-2022, Workcred brought together a network of certification bodies to explore the potential for data-linking efforts to improve understanding of the value of certifications, the aggregate labor market outcomes of certifications, and insights into successful career pathways into the workforce. The network is working with the National Student Clearinghouse to match data from certification bodies, educational attainment and enrollment data from universities, and aggregate wage data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Despite their prevalence in the workforce, there is no complete, centralized source of data on the outcomes or impact of certifications. While there have been isolated efforts to collect this data by states, as well as self-reported data from certification bodies, outcomes data are fragmented and incomplete. By linking different data sets, the information can be used by individuals, employers, and policymakers can make more informed choices about the return on investment of certifications.

ABOUT WORKCRED

Formed in 2014, Workcred is an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Its mission is to strengthen workforce quality by improving the credentialing system, ensuring its ongoing relevance, and preparing employers, workers, educators, and governments to use it effectively. Workcred's vision is a labor market that relies on the relevance, quality, and value of workforce credentials for opportunities, growth, and development.

INTRODUCTION

Many industry sectors have professional associations that provide research, resources, education, and advocacy. In higher education, there are a number of associations that not only bring together college and university faculty and administrators, but also lobby on behalf of the institutions. One group of higher education associations known as the Big Six—the American Council on Education (ACE), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Association of American Universities (AAU), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU)—focus on advocacy, policy, research, and provide opportunities for higher education leaders to address critical issues facing higher education. In addition, many of these organizations also have initiatives and projects geared towards specific topics like student success, equity, institutional transformation, accountability, and community engagement.

Similar to higher education, there are professional associations that convene organizations that offer credentials outside of higher education institutions, like certificates, certifications, and licenses. These organizations may not be as familiar to people who work outside of such credentialing organizations or in higher education. This issue brief provides an overview of the main organizations that provide education, research, best practices, and advocacy for credentialing bodies and/or their employees.

ASSOCIATION OF TEST PUBLISHERS

Many people encounter tests or assessments as they prepare for and advance in their career or seek employment. Tests and assessments are used to obtain a certification or license, as part of a candidate screening process, to assess skills of incumbent workers, and as part of entrance requirements for college or graduate school. Through education and advocacy, the mission of the Association of Test Publishers (ATP) is to promote best practices in testing and assessment, and advocate on behalf of the test publishing industry.

Formed in 1992, ATP provides the opportunity for test publishers to come together and speak with a united voice on issues that impact test publishing both nationally and internationally. ATP is a non-profit membership organization that is governed by a chief executive officer and a board of directors comprised of individuals from the test publishing community. Reporting to the board of directors are practice area divisions, regional divisions, and standing committees. The regional divisions reflect ATP's global reach and are divided into Asia, Europe, India, and North America.

There are five practice area divisions and each focuses on a specific type of assessment—certification and licensure, clinical, education, industrial/organization, and workforce skills. Certification and licensure exams may take multiple forms including written, oral, or performance based. Clinical assessments are used by people who make diagnoses related to issues such as cognitive ability, personality type, academic skill, and behavioral problems. Education assessments are used in formal education ranging from K-12 to postsecondary education as well as in corporate training programs. Another form of assessment is industrial or organization, which is used as part of the hiring and promotion process in companies and the military. And, the organization offers advocacy services by providing its members with updates on state and federal legislation and regulations impacting the test publishing industry. The final practice area focuses on assessment of workforce skills. The assessments are more narrowly focused on occupationally specific skills or personality traits.[1]

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1   Association of Test Publishers, "Welcome to ATP's Practice Area Divisions and Standing Committees," accessed Mach 21, 2022: https://www.testpublishers.org/practice-area-divisions-committees.

FIGURE 1: ATP'S FIVE PRACTICE AREAS AND ASSESSMENT TYPES

Certification and Licensure
Written, oral, or performance-based exams

Clinical Assessment
Used by people using therapy or making diagnoses

Education Assessment
Used in formal K–12, postsecondary, and corporate training programs

Industrial or Organizational
Used as part of the hiring and promotion process in companies and the military

Assessment and Workforce Skills
Narrowly focused on occupationally specific skills or personality traits

Similar to many higher education associations, ATP also focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by promoting fairness and eliminating bias in testing. With the increased use of technology platforms to administer assessments, the International Test Commission and the Association of Test Publishers developed *Guidelines for Technology-Based Assessment* to "ensure fair and valid assessment in a digital environment."[2]

ATP issues a variety of publications—a quarterly newsletter, an annual report, and the *Journal of Applied Testing*. The journal, which is peer-reviewed, focuses on research to improve testing and assessments. ATP also publishes white papers on issues of critical importance such as online/remote proctoring and artificial intelligence.

There are also opportunities for ATP members to share promising practices, exchange information, and discuss challenges through a variety of events. The annual U.S. conference, *Innovations in Testing*, brings together psychometricians, researchers, and practitioners in credentialing. Conference sessions focus on issues such as identifying test security risks, how technology can promote fairness and equity in assessments, the use of performance-based testing, and how to measure new ways of learning. In addition to the annual conference, ATP hosts other events such as the *EdTech and Computational Psychometrics Summit, Global Security Summit*, international conferences, and various webinars and workshops throughout the year.

For more information about ATP, see https://www.testpublishers.org.

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2   International Test Commission and Association of Test Publishers, Guidelines for Technology-Based Assessment, Page 1 (March 13, 2022): https://www.testpublishers.org/assets/TBA%20Guidelines%203-14-2022%20draft%20numbered.pdf.

CERTIFICATION NETWORK GROUP

The Certification Network Group (CNG) is a volunteer-led, professional association governed by a board of directors that provides resources for certification professionals. Similar to the formation of ATP, CNG began as an informal group in the early 1980s. In 2013, CNG formalized its operations and became a non-profit organization with the mission of "providing opportunities, relationship building, education, and resources for certification professionals to support their initiatives in certification, accreditation, and customer service."[3]

CNG facilitates networking and educational events between individuals employed by certification bodies and organizations that offer services such as testing platforms, exam security, psychometrics, online proctoring, and test development. With a concentration of certification bodies in the Chicago and Washington, DC, metropolitan areas, CNG has two steering committees from these areas that plan and host in-person and virtual events, which cover such topics as:[4]

» "Should your Association Develop a Microcredential?"

» "Managing During Disruption: How Certification Organizations are Retaining and Growing Business"

» "Credentialing and Accessibility: Exploring Ways to Incorporate Accessibility into Your Credentialing Programs"

» "Connecting Certification and Education Data to Understand Career and Credential Pathways"

» "Ways to Approach and Develop Your Organization's Value Proposition"

For more information about CNG, see https://certificationnetworkgroup.org.

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3   Certification Network Group, "History," accessed March 21, 2022: https://certificationnetworkgroup.org/History.

4   Certification Network Group, "Events," accessed March 23, 2022: https://certificationnetworkgroup.org/events.

COUNCIL ON LICENSURE, ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATION

Founded more than 40 years ago, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) brings together individuals and organizations from around the world involved in professional and occupational regulation of mandatory certifications, licensure, and registration of regulated occupations. CLEAR offers two membership categories—regular and associate. Regular membership is available to government agencies, associations of government agencies, and employees or officials of government agencies and legislated (publicly mandated) organizations concerned with professional and occupational regulation. Associate memberships are available to organizations, vendors, and individually to their staff who have an interest in occupational and professional regulation but do not qualify for regular membership.

Members come together to promote regulatory excellence, and discuss issues related to administration, legislation, and policy; compliance and discipline; and examination and measurement at the *Annual Educational Conference*. CLEAR set up a program committee for the conference, which is broken down into four subcommittees that are responsible for providing guidance on relevant content, developing sessions, and reviewing session proposals for a specific conference track.[5] Such session topics may include job task analyses, defining competencies within a scope of practice, cyber and physical security, and how regulatory organizations administer discipline if a credential holder violates the law.

In addition, CLEAR provides its members with resources, learning opportunities, and publications to help them advance in their profession or grow their organization. Resources include toolkits, podcasts, legislative updates, and court decisions that impact occupational licensure and regulation. Toolkits provide information that help regulatory agencies perform their daily operations and develop and implement policies so organizations can build upon the best practices of each other. Another key resource is legislative updates, which allow CLEAR members to stay abreast of state legislation that is being proposed or enacted, since new laws and regulations can have a direct impact on members' operations. For example, several states have proposed legislation that would allow out-of-state telehealth providers

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5   Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, "Annual Educational Conference Program Committee," accessed March 18, 2022: https://www.clearhq.org/AECcommittee.

to offer services in states where a provider is not licensed.[6] This raises issues for these states about what policies and practices to change if out-of-state license holders are eligible to practice in their state.

Since examination and assessment are such a critical part of licensing and regulation, CLEAR also publishes a journal, *CLEAR Exam Review*, twice a year. The journal addresses issues about certification and licensing examination practices including legal challenges, the use of technology in testing, accreditation in certification programs, and certification testing. Case studies and issue briefs are also published and can be used by the certification and licensure organizations to keep-up-date with current issues and promising practices.

For more information about CLEAR, see https://www.clearhq.org.

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6   Manatt, Phelps, and Phillips, LLP, "Emerging Trends in Out-of-State Telehealth Licensure Legislation," in JDSUPRA (March 11, 2022) https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/emerging-trends-in-out-of-state-1477509.

INSTITUTE FOR CREDENTIALING EXCELLENCE

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.) is a membership organization that provides advocacy, research, and educational resources for credentialing professionals. I.C.E. is a non-profit organization that is governed by an executive director and a board of directors. The history of I.C.E. involves multiple organizations and name changes; what is now I.C.E. began in 1977 at the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies (NCHCA) to develop standards for voluntary certification in healthcare. As NCHCA grew, other needs were identified that went beyond the initial scope of NCHCA, which include providing education to credentialing professionals, developing standards for certifications and certificate programs, and accrediting credentialing programs against a standard. To meet these diverse needs, the membership, education, and standards functions were brought together to form a new organization, the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA). NCHCA was renamed the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and became the accrediting body for NOCA. In 2009, NOCA was renamed to I.C.E. and NCCA continues to serve as an accrediting body for certifications and assessment-based certificates.

I.C.E. provides webinars, workshops, and online courses to help people enter or advance in the credentialing profession. Online courses cover such topics as the lifecycle of a certification from identifying the need for a certification, developing the certification and creating recertification policies, to sustaining the certification. Courses also cover the fundamentals of assessment-based certificates, and factors certification bodies should consider when determining if a certification should be offered in specific countries or globally.

To develop and grow credentialing professionals, I.C.E. created two programs: the Certificate Program for the Credentialing Specialist (assessment-based), and the I.C.E. Certified Credentialing Professional (ICE-CCP) certification program. There are no eligibility requirements or prerequisites to enroll in the certificate program. Participants must complete eight modules over six months that cover needs assessment, accreditation standards, certification administration, certification operations, key psychometric concepts,

exam development, governance, and legal issues.[7] Participants must pass an assessment at the end of each module, and a certificate is awarded after the participant passes all of the assessments.

Individuals who complete the ICE-CCP certification program have "demonstrated competence in professional credentialing, including in governance and resources, credentialing program operations, and assessment development and validation."[8]

FIGURE 2: I.C.E. CREDENTIALING PROGRAMS

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR THE CREDENTIALING SPECIALIST

Eligibility Requirements: None

Type of Credential Awarded: Assessment-based certificate

What is the Meaning of the Certificate?: Participants who earn the certificate have passed an assessment after eight training modules that indicates they have met the learning objectives.

I.C.E. CERTIFIED CREDENTIALING PROFESSIONAL (ICE-CCP)

Eligibility Requirements: Credentialing professionals with three years of experience in the certification or licensing fields in one or more of the domains covered by the examination (governance and resources, credentialing program operations, or assessment development and validation).

Type of Credential Awarded: Certification

What is the Meaning of the Certificate?: An individual who passes the exam has demonstrated competence in the content areas mentioned above.

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7   Institute for Credentialing Excellence, "Certificate Program for the Credentialing Specialist Participant Handbook" (November 2014): https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/portals/0/docs/education/Certificate%20Program%20Participant%20Handbook.pdf.

8   Institute for Credentialing Excellence, "I.C.E. Certified Credentialing Professional (ICE-CCP) Handbook, Edition #2, Expires 11/22" (2022): https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/Portals/0/ICE-CCP%20Candidate%20Handbook_2022_1.pdf.

By earning this certification, individuals demonstrate that they have knowledge across those three areas. This certification is intended for credentialing professionals with three years of experience or a combination of experience and other certificates, certifications, or degrees.

In addition to the credentialing programs, I.C.E. provides its members with information about the infrastructure that must be created to build, govern, and sustain a credentialing body as well as to develop the professionals necessary to create and implement a certification. Through its research, resources, and conferences, I.C.E. helps its members stay current on trends in credentialing. The annual event is the *I.C.E. Exchange* where the credentialing community shares best practices and the latest developments in credentialing. The conference is geared toward people engaged in all aspects of credentialing—assessment, psychometrics, sales and marketing, governance, operations, and membership.

I.C.E. also publishes an online journal, *Credentialing Insights*, which highlights best practices and provides information about issues facing credentialing bodies as well as opportunities for consideration. For example, one article focuses on noncognitive assessments and the opportunity for certification bodies to include noncognitive assessments in some part of the certification lifecycle.[9] Other articles address topics such as accommodations for credentialing exams, addressing security breaches, diversity of credentialing professionals, and remote proctoring.

For more information about I.C.E., see https://www.credentialingexcellence.org.

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9   Institute for Credentialing Excellence, "The Increasing Importance of Noncognitive Competencies: Opportunities for Credentialing Assessment," in *Credentialing Insights* (February 4, 2022): https://www.credentialinginsights.org/Article/the-increasing-importance-of-noncognitive-competencies-opportunities-for-credentialing-assessment-1.

CONCLUSION

Similar to other industry sectors, the certification and licensure community has a group of organizations that offer professional development opportunities, provide resources to members and non-members, track legislative and policy developments, and bring people together at conferences and webinars. These organizations are useful resources for policymakers and education and training providers who are making decisions that affect certifications, assessment-based certificates, and licensure.