# CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIOS

Key considerations to build a credentialing portfolio.

Today's workforce requires varied options to demonstrate expertise and attainment of job-related skills. Gone are the days of the "one certification program fits all" solution. Instead, organizations should consider a broader approach to building a diverse product portfolio that meets the needs of individuals throughout their career from entry level to advanced.
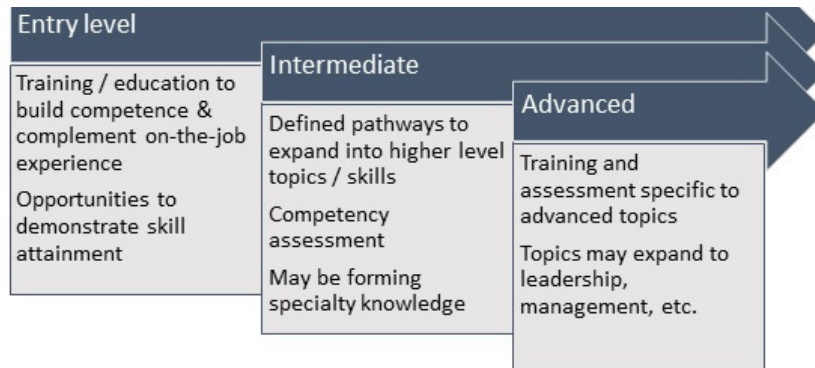
Like other strategic decisions, start with the "why." Why might a collection of credentialing products benefit the organization and the stakeholders it serves? Undoubtedly, the first reason addresses the needs and wants of the changing workforce. Generationally, engagement with a certifying organization varies with more novice members of the workforce seeking new and flexible ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skill. Alternative offerings can complement traditional certifications to better align with today's workforce.

Creating a credentialing portfolio provides benefits for the organization and individuals working in the field, and those interested in joining it.

- Products designed for different experience levels provide a clear pathway through their career, providing achievement milestones along the way.
- Engaging practitioners early and throughout their careers allows the organization to stay connected with individuals throughout their journey, rather than just at the starting point.
- A collection of products helps to diversify the revenue stream and provides opportunities for partnerships with aligned organizations.

Certification is only one credentialing option available. Other options include assessment-based certification programs and micro-credentials or alternative pathways to certification such as stackable or progressive models.

The success of a product portfolio begins with understanding audience needs. This is not a journey to embark on without understanding what stakeholders need. This includes all stakeholders, from considering what certificants need to perform competently and advance in their careers to evaluating what employers need to keep their workforce informed and updated. It also requires organizational flexibility and creativity. Innovation might not always be synonymous with credentialing, but it is essential to thinking about products with different audiences in mind. Consider these six questions as a starting point.

(1) Why are we doing this? The "why" of a decision is the best place to start. What is motivating the decision? Is it being driven by staff, volunteers, a small (but vocal) group of stakeholders, members, etc.? What goals and outcomes do you hope to achieve with this approach?

(2) Is there a real need? Data is king and having evidence to support the need for the program goes a long way to making the right decision. For example, a competency modeling project may help to define the audience needs to demonstrate competency and advance and the appropriate credentialing product to meet it.

(3) Is there a market? A feasibility study and needs analysis better help the organization understand the audience's interest and likelihood to participate in or purchase new products. The organization must also understand if there are competitive products in the market.

(4) Can we afford it? What are the costs to develop different products both in the short and long term? What is the responsibility to update and maintain the programs moving forward?

(5) Are we prepared for the long run? This is a good opportunity to consider a prioritization plan. It is likely not feasible to launch a completed portfolio with diverse products. Instead, the organization will need to prioritize the options and develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness and success of each new product offered.

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