



A L A B A M A

Talent Playbook



Credential Data and LERs

Transparency, Quality, and Functionality:

**The Role of Credential Data
in the Alabama Talent Triad**

The Role of Credential Data



Transparency, Quality, and Functionality: The Role of Program, Credential, and Skills Data in the Alabama Talent Triad

Over the last few decades, the economy has been undergoing transformation that requires more skilled labor than ever before in the U.S. In response, there have been many programs created for individuals to earn credentials and the necessary skills for good jobs. These include the traditional college and degree programs but also include an array of apprenticeships, industry certifications, certificates, badges, and other micro credentials. Most recently, President Trump issued an Executive Order, “Preparing Americans for High Paying Skilled Jobs of the Future” calling for 1M new apprenticeships, and the Departments of Labor, Education and Commerce released AMERICA’S TALENT STRATEGY: BUILDING THE WORKFORCE FOR THE GOLDEN AGE also calling for the scaling of registered apprenticeships and alignment programs. As public policy leaders, employers and jobseekers seek to understand various program and pathway options, the importance of credential transparency and accountability has risen to the top of the list of key transformations needed to ensure individuals can find the programs and outcomes they need to efficiently and effectively work towards a career, building on what they already know and can do, and for employers to trust the credentials and skills candidates are bringing to the table.

As a result, many states have begun to create credential transparency by leveraging new technologies and open-linked data systems. Through the efforts of these states, an understanding of credentials is beginning to emerge that is designed to account for the nearly one million postsecondary credentials that are offered in the U.S. There is a clear benefit to a registry of programs – it can enable a clear and comprehensive overview of the credentials and skills that are offered in that array programs, and can act as a vital tool in understanding our complex workforce ecosystem in the nation. In envisioning the Alabama Talent Triad, the state of Alabama saw the necessity of developing a statewide program registry and launched the Alabama Credential Registry in 2022 to achieve the state’s vision to connect citizens to all potential pathways, as well as to establish and execute on the Compendium of Valuable Credentials policy to evidence that the credential can lead to further education and employment.

The Role of Credential Data

With the passage of Act 2023-365, Alabama has codified its non-degree credential quality assurance and transparency criteria and the iterative, demand-driven process for developing an annual list of credentials of value that have met the non-degree credential quality assurance and transparency criteria, known as the Compendium of Valuable Credentials. Act 2023-365 provides for establishing the Non-Degree Credential Quality and Transparency Committee as a committee of the Alabama Workforce Council. These steps provide the basis for sustaining Alabama's non-degree credential policies over time.

Announced in 2021, the Alabama Credential Registry is a transparent open linked data record of all the credentials available in Alabama, most importantly the credentials of value, including certificates, licenses & degrees. Constructing a state-level registry was a conscious decision on the part of Alabama's state leaders and is a foundational component of the Talent Triad. It enables Alabama to intentionally prioritize transparency, quality, and functionality in its work to develop a talent marketplace that serves employers, students, jobseekers and education providers, while also serving the state and national public good. Furthermore, Alabama wanted to go beyond providing a list of credentials available. The Alabama Credential Registry includes transparency of degree and non-degree programs, the credentials and skills learned and earned, the Compendium of Valuable Credential review process, and the ability to issue validated credentials and skills.

Executive Summary

The rationale behind Alabama developing its own credential registry can be summarized in the following:

- **Quality:** Alabama uses its Credential Registry for quality assurance and governance, in particular the critical role establishing quality standards and assuring the quality of programs and credentials offered in the state. The ability to ensure Alabamians have access to high-quality credentials that are aligned to industry needs and lead to economic mobility is top priority for the state to drive economic growth and the prosperity of its citizens. While the Alabama Credential Registry enables inclusion of all types of credentials from many types of contributors, only credentials that meet the state's quality standards and review criteria are admitted into the Compendium of Valuable Credentials within the Registry. Alabama was an early mover among states that adopted a high-quality non-degree credential definition based on the National Skills Coalition's definition of a quality non-degree credential:

"A quality non-degree credential provides individuals with the means to equitably achieve their informed employment and educational goals. There must be valid, reliable, and transparent evidence that the credential satisfies the criteria that constitute quality, which include (1) substantial job opportunities, (2) transparent evidence of the competencies mastered by credential holders, (3) evidence of employment earning outcomes of individuals after obtaining employment, and (4) stability to additional education or training is strongly preferred."

The Role of Credential Data

Alabama's State Workforce Development Board and 24 state education and workforce agencies adopted this definition in 2019 by administrative rule, and the definition was codified by Act 2023-365. To ensure the landscape is transparent about quality credentials offered in the state, the Alabama Credential Registry requires more data than other registries might request. This includes skills and competencies, associated wage earnings, and stackability, as well as the designation as an Alabama Credential of Value on the Compendium of Valuable Credentials. The enhanced data and data relationships enables Alabama leaders to conceive of broader applications for the data and the provision of personalized pathways for each Alabamian.

- **Accountability & Transparency:** The Alabama Talent Triad supports accountability and provides transparency for individuals to gain the skills and credentials aligned to the workforce. Efficiency is gained by ensuring individuals can access programs and credentials that build upon what they already know and can do. To serve individuals, citizens can build their Learning & Employment Record with validated skills and credentials through the interoperability that is implemented with student information systems (SISs) and LMSs to populate validated LERs. Alabamians can then use their LERs from various education partners to populate job and learning recommendations that match their current skillsets. The Alabama Credential Registry works in tandem with the Alabama LERs in making credential data and stackable sequences transparent while illuminating quality pathways that are personalized for each individual based on their current and desired skill set. The Alabama Credential Registry also ensures the transparency of credentials by including affiliated skills to support a skills-based economy.
- **Functionality:** Furthermore, the Alabama Talent Triad leverages the Credential Registry to provide recommended candidates to employers. The Registry is deeply integrated into the Skills-Based Job Description Generator in the Talent Triad that empowers employers to see and leverage credentials and skills within their job descriptions that match the LER profiles of job candidates. Individuals and employers are thereby matched to each other using a shared credential and skills language.
- **Public Good:** The Alabama Talent Triad prioritizes interoperability and their contribution to national efforts to bring credential transparency across the country. State leaders also recognized that to serve its citizens and uphold its responsibility to facilitate transparency, along with quality and functionality, program transparency through their affiliated credential and skills data need to be used to drive accountability and alignment with industry-driven strategies supported by state and federal legislators.

Credential & Skills Data and LERs

The Alabama Credential Registry is valuable as a stand-alone way to understand the program and credential landscape and their alignment with industry needs. However, as a connected module as part of the broader effort of the Alabama Talent Triad to create a talent marketplace where students, jobseekers, employers, and education and training providers can easily connect, provides the opportunity to create better data on the desired outcomes of the investments made in education and training.

The Role of Credential Data

To best serve individuals and employers, Alabama learned early on that what was most critical to producing outcomes and matching individuals to in-demand jobs, was ensuring the ability to validate the skills and credentials acquired through education and training programs. Therefore, Alabama envisioned a platform that would, on an individual learner basis, serve as a record of validated skills and credentials that demonstrated what was learned and earned in each program.

This is critical in creating a unified, transparent, and industry-aligned talent marketplace.

The Alabama Talent Triad utilizes and transforms program, credential, and skills data in the following ways:

- Programs in the Alabama Credential Registry are tagged to the skills and credential each program is designed to provide for individuals.
- Based on individuals' unique experiences and coursework, individual skills are logged in the LER which is visualized in the LER of each individual. This data will include both the individual skills and credentials attained by individuals, sync'd from the education and training provider as the source of truth.
- Once an individual has populated their LER with both validated and self-attested credentials and skills, they can create Digital Resumes, which are the "profiles" a user can opt to share with employers in the Talent Triad.

This is certainly a more complex and expansive approach than only verifying and linking to aggregate information about credentials and even verifying core competencies gained by most students and would be a leap for most systems. However, Alabama views this approach as a means of building a true skills-based economy that can be trusted by employers, citizens, and education providers.

Technology Vendors and Partners

This unprecedented alignment and collaboration across sectors is made possible through the right tools and technology. Alabama utilizes a vendor to support the Talent Triad, including the Alabama Credential Registry, maximizing the best of Software as a Service (SaaS) and custom services. This ensures scalability, sustainability, and security, while also offering a modern experience for all Alabamians. Rather than creating in-house technology, Alabama Credential Registry is powered by EBSCO, the leading global provider of research content and technology. In recent years, EBSCO has acted on its commitment to supporting lifelong learning through technology solutions and providing open education content for learners of all ages.

The relationship between Alabama and EBSCO is key to understanding the public-private partnership that is supporting the vision of the Alabama Talent Triad. Key aspects of the relationship are defined below.

The Role of Credential Data

- Like any technology vendor, EBSCO is committed to their clients and enables their vision for solutions to the thorniest problems facing education and workforce leaders at the local, state, national, and global levels. In this case, Alabama is responsible for setting the criteria for transparency, quality, and desired functionality. As for quality and functionality, technology platforms can support these definitions established by states and other quality assurance entities but should not themselves create these definitions.
- Vendors prioritize end-user experiences. EBSCO views its role as creating workflows that make the state's priorities actionable. As a vendor, EBSCO can provide the level of service, support, and continuous improvement that Alabama needs and desires for its citizens, employers, and education providers.

The Alabama Credential Registry requires data maintenance from education providers connected to quality assurance and approval processes. Prior submissions were often unstandardized and/or incomplete. Now the Alabama Credential Registry platform ensures providers are prompted to submit complete data and maintain that data in accordance with state governance processes and best practices supported by workflows housed within the Talent Triad.

- The Alabama Credential Registry also supports programs, credentials, and skills as well as standardized stackable sequencing at the program level for a more browsable and navigable pathway experience.
- Once required data is submitted to the Alabama Credential Registry, it can be submitted for state review and inclusion in the Compendium of Valued Credentials within the Alabama Credential Registry.
- The Alabama Credential Registry supports data sharing to student and jobseeker mobility, as well as national initiatives that span beyond Alabama's borders.

As state policy leaders consider the aims and objectives of their efforts to bring transparency, quality, functionality, accountability, and industry alignment to the credential ecosystem through credential registries and LERs, they should understand the key to scale and success of these platforms is to ensure they are actionable.

This requires a commitment to interoperability, recognizing that credential registries and LERs need to interact with many contributors and systems ranging from education and training providers to licensure and certification providers to employers to support verification. The Digital Credentials Consortium notes, "merely digitizing academic/university credentials alone does not bring enough value to employers for them to show much active interest in them." Interaction with employer-facing systems is important to gain employer buy-in and create intelligence that connects education and workforce outcomes, as well as value for jobseekers.

The Role of Credential Data

Consider how interoperability and comprehensive approaches to registering credentials with skills can drive increased transparency, quality assurance, and efficiency in state mandates to align education and workforce across agencies. For example, many states have adopted committees that are responsible for providing credential and skills insights connected to industry needs. Alabama utilizes its Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways (ACCCP), which is supported by 16 Technical Advisory Committees that serve as industry sectoral partnerships and are focused on industry and regional needs. The ACCCP was codified by Act 2019-506, and it produces regional and statewide list of in-demand jobs annually, occupational competency models, and dynamic career pathways. The criteria approved by the ACCCP is used by the Alabama Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency (ACCQT), codified in 2023 by Act 2023-365 to evaluate all the credentials registered to the Alabama Credential Registry against the ten non-degree credential quality and transparency criteria. No committee can manually review hundreds or thousands of credentials and/or have comprehensive insight into how specific credentials connect to particular jobs. Using the Alabama Credential Registry and insights emerging from the Talent Triad, Alabama will be able to streamline and enhance the work of these committees. States may also benefit from improved articulation agreements and academic program design.

Understanding how to select and partner with organizations and technology vendors to provide verification support and services is also essential. Further, state leaders should recognize the increased value in creating a unified and industry-aligned solution to underpin program, credential, and skills transparency and accountability as well as the value validation of skills and competencies can create for end-users, including learners, jobseekers and employers alike. The Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) supports the Alabama Talent Triad in advancing a competency-based approach, while EBSCO provides technology and responsible AI infrastructure that powers the platform. Both organizations are eager to work with states to help them adopt emerging best practices and to consider their options for building LERs and Credential Registries that enable skills-based hiring and effective upskilling.

We encourage you to reach out for more information. Please visit <https://www.alabamatalenttriad.com/> for forthcoming briefs and resources charting the work of the Alabama Talent Triad.

The Role of Credential Data

Research and Resources

America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, published by the US Department of Labor, US Department of Commerce, and US Department of Education.

<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2025/08/Americas-Talent-Strategy-Building-the-Workforce-for-the-Golden-Age.pdf>.

Partnering with the Department of Labor to Create a National Skills Currency, by Nick Moore.

<https://blog.ed.gov/2025/07/partnering-with-the-department-of-labor-to-create-a-national-skills-currency/>

The Education Design Lab produced a design manifesto, [Skills Visibility: Why and How a Skills-Based Economy can be More Equitable](#).

Brookings Institution produced a report entitled "[Going digital: How learning and employment records shape access to quality education and jobs](#)" that provides an effective framework for implementation and highlights the role of interoperability in effective implementation.

[Credentials to Employment: The Last Mile](#) from the Digital Credentials Consortium highlights the role of interoperability in creating incentives and value specifically for employers, noting,

CNM Ingenuity's Blockchain Center of Excellence and partners produced [A National Learning and Employment Records Infrastructure: Progress Towards a Skills Economy](#), which underscores the need for interoperable skills-based records that enable "an individual's lifetime cradle to career skills-building journey."

The US Chamber Foundation supports the [Jobs and Employment Data Exchange, JEDx](#), a data standards based approach for improved signaling and reporting on job openings and position descriptions.

National Skills Coalition provides ongoing leadership in supporting states to adopt high-quality credential criteria. In [this brief](#), NSC describes how six states, including Alabama, are using criteria to advance their goals. The reports linked in [this blog](#), provide insights into quality criteria and state policy actions for improved credential quality and transparency.

The logo features a stylized 'A' composed of two overlapping geometric shapes: a light red parallelogram on the left and a white circle on the right.

ALABAMA
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