



Montana Department of LABOR & INDUSTRY

1
2 **Division: Workforce Services Division**
3 **Category: WIOA**
4 **Effective Date: 10/1/2018**
5 **Last Revised: 07/01/2024**
6 **Policy No.: 18-18**

Credentials Policy

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8 **Background:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the State Workforce
9 Innovation Board (SWIB) to increase credential attainment by Montana’s job seekers. Identifying and obtaining
10 credentials assists job seekers to acquire and document the skills and competencies needed for quality, in-
11 demand occupations, while meeting the workforce development needs of local business communities.
12 Credentials also serve as a key signal to businesses that they are hiring qualified individuals. Credential
13 attainment offers job seekers, businesses, and their local communities opportunities for economic growth and
14 stability.

15 **Scope:** This policy applies to all service providers required to report Credentials to Montana Department of
16 Labor & Industry (MTDLI) as the administrative entity responsible for the operation of the WIOA Title 1B core
17 programs. This policy is effective July 8, 2024.

18 **Policy:**

19 **A. WIOA Definition**

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- 21 • A recognized postsecondary credential is awarded in recognition of an individuals attainment of
22 measurable technical or industry/occupations skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within
23 that industry or occupation.
 - 24 • Before being counted as a successful outcome, participants who obtain a secondary school diploma or
25 the equivalent must also meet the additional condition of employment or enrollment in education or
26 training leading to a postsecondary credential within one year following exit.
 - 27 • A secondary school diploma that is recognized by the state and is included for accountability purposes
28 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by Every Student Succeeds
29 Act (ESSA). A secondary school equivalency certification documents that a student has completed the
30 requirements of a high school education. Examples of secondary school diplomas, alternate diplomas,
31 and recognized equivalents recognized by the states include:
 - 32 ○ Obtaining certification of attaining passing scores on a state-recognized high school equivalency
33 test;
 - 34 ○ Earning secondary school diplomas, alternate diplomas, and recognized equivalent through a
35 credit bearing secondary education program sanctioned by state law, code or regulation;
 - 36 ○ Obtaining certification of passing a state-recognized, competency-based assessment; and
 - 37 ○ Completion of a specified number of college credits.
 - 38 • Only participants who exited due to one of the following reasons will be excluded from performance
39 calculations:
 - 40 ○ Institutionalized
 - Health/Medical

- 41 ○ Deceased
- 42 ○ Reserve forces called to active duty
- 43 ○ Foster care
- 44 ○ Ineligible
- 45 ○ Criminal offender
- 46

47 B. Participants

48 All participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and
49 customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school
50 diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A
51 participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the
52 percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, only if
53 the participant is also employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized
54 postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program.

55 Participants will be included in the measure six quarters after exit from enrollment. Since training or education
56 programs are defined by each core program, the following participants are included by core program:

- 57 ● Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker – All Adult and Dislocated Worker program participants who were
58 enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in an OJT or Customized Training) are
59 included in the credential attainment indicator.
- 60 ● Title I Youth – All in-school youth are included in the measure. Out-of-school youth are included if they
61 are enrolled in one of the following education or training programs at any point during the program year.
62 Occupational skills training;
 - 63 ○ Secondary education (or the equivalent);
 - 64 ○ Postsecondary education;
 - 65 ○ Title II-funded adult education concurrent with the Youth program;
 - 66 ○ Youth Build program participation concurrent with the Youth program; or
 - 67 ○ Job Corps program participation concurrent with the Youth program.
- 68 ● Please note: As reflected in the Youth Program’s elements, On-The-Job Training (OJT) is considered a
69 type of Work Experience (WEX) for youth and is not considered training. Youth participating in an OJT, or
70 any type of WEX, will not be included in the Credentials indicator.

72 C. Credential Types

73 1. Educational Diplomas, Degrees, and Certificates

- 74 ● Associate’s degree
- 75 ● Bachelor’s degree
- 76 ● Educational certificate
- 77 ● Secondary school diploma

78 2. Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) Certificates of Completion

- 79 ● Registered Apprenticeship Program Certificates of Completion
- 80 ● Interim credentials

81 3. Occupational Licenses

- 82 ● Issued by government entities

83 4. Certifications

- 84 ● Industry or professional association; or product vendor, i.e. Google Project Management

85 5. Other

- 86 ● Recognized certificates of industry or occupational skills completion sufficient to qualify for entry-level or
87 advancement in employment

89 D. Characteristics of Credentials

90 Four characteristics strengthen the value of credentials to individuals and businesses:

91 1. Industry Recognition

92 2. Stackability

- 93 • A sequence of credentials accumulated over time to build up a job seeker’s qualifications.
- 94 • Assists job seekers to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially
- 95 higher-wage jobs.

96 3. Portability

- 97 • Recognized and accepted as supporting the qualifications an individual in other settings, for example:
- 98 geographical locations across the country; educational institutions; or other industries or businesses..
- 99 • RAP Certificates of Completion.

100 4. Accreditation

- 101 • By an independent, quality-review body is a valuable attribute and is often required for education
- 102 institutions so that students may be eligible for federal financial aid. For example:
- 103 • An institution of higher education, including those formally controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by the
- 104 governing body of an Indian tribe (s);
- 105 • Community college;
- 106 • A State agency responsible for vocation or technical education; or
- 107 • A specific education program, such as one approved by the Department of Veteran Affairs, offering
- 108 education benefits to veterans and other eligible individuals.
- 109 • Some credentials offered by industry or professional associations or product vendors may not be
- 110 accredited. In that case, please consider the following additional markers of quality or labor market
- 111 value:
 - 112 ○ Industry-wide recognition;
 - 113 ○ Professional association acceptance; or
 - 114 ○ Local demand.

115

116 E. Identifying Relevant Credentials

117 Providers should make sure that credentials count toward the WIOA primary indicators of performance in the

118 following ways, that:

- 119 • The training program is offered by an organization or institution that awards postsecondary credentials;
- 120 • The credential results in industry-wide, measurable technical or industry/occupation skills; and
- 121 • The training is one of the following:
 - 122 ○ Occupational skills training including training for nontraditional employment and for training
 - 123 programs operated by the private sector; (requires Eligible Training Provider–ETP)
 - 124 ○ Training programs operated by the private sector; (requires ETP)
 - 125 ○ Skill upgrading and retraining; (requires ETP)
 - 126 ○ Entrepreneurial training; (requires ETP)
 - 127 ○ Adult education and literacy activities, including English language acquisition, provided in
 - 128 combination with services described above; (does not require ETP) or
 - 129 ○ Registered Apprenticeship.
- 130 • The secondary school diploma meets [the WIOA definition](#) provided in section A.

131

132 F. Documentation

133 Credentials must be recorded as soon as they are earned during program participation; and can be recorded up

134 to one year after exit. Only one Credential earned by the participant is used to calculate performance for the

135 performance measure. MTDLI’s Workforce Services Division must ensure that service provider staff record all

136 Credentials achieved in a timely manner to reflect full accounting of gains reported to the United States

137 Department of Labor (USDOL), Congress, and other stakeholders.

- 138 • All training services must be clearly identified and expectations for earning a credential must be stated in
- 139 the participant’s Individual Service Strategy, Individual Employment Plan, Individualized Plan for
- 140 Employment, or PEP Talk.

- 141 ○ The participant must understand that once training begins, he or she is expected to complete all
142 requirements.
143 ○ If the participant fails to complete the entire program, program personnel must not report a
144 credential.
145 • Service providers must include supporting documentation in the participant's file. Please refer to the
146 [WIOA Data Validation Policy and the Federal Required Source Documentation Attachment](#).
147

148 Performance Assessment:

149 Credential performance is assessed quarterly and annually using results from WIOA Performance Reporting
150 Layout, also known as the PIRL. The following policies discuss performance reporting requirements,
151 performance negotiations and sanctions, and additional performance measures:

- 152 • [Performance Measures and Reporting Policy](#)
153 • [WIOA Data Validation Policy and the Federal Required Source Documentation Attachment](#).
154
155

156 Monitoring and Technical Assistance:

- 157 • A formal monitoring will be conducted by the entity designated by SWIB.
158 • Technical assistance will be provided by the Title I Program Managers.

159 References:

- 160 • [TEGL 10-16, Change 3 - Performance Accountability Guidance](#)
161 • [TEGL 14-18 Aligning Performance Accountability Reporting, Definitions, and Policies](#)
162 • [TEN 25-19 Understanding Postsecondary Credentials in the Public Workforce System](#)
163 • [WIOA Eligible Training Providers](#)