



## THE CORNERSTONES

### MISSION

Inform and facilitate the development of a nationally adopted incremental credentialing ecosystem that improves education and employment outcomes for all learners.

### VISION

We envision an incremental credentialing ecosystem in which all learners are recognized for what they know and can do as they acquire learning from multiple sources. The meaning of those credentials will be understood by learners, employers, and educational institutions. Learners will be able to earn credentials to fit their needs and inform their education-career planning, including job transitions. These credentials will be used by employers in hiring and advancement and recognized within the postsecondary ecosystem as counting towards further learning.

### WHY DOES *CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO* MATTER?

*Credential As You Go* will embrace and align the growing array of credentials, including certificates, certifications, badges, microcredentials, and degrees. Incremental credentialing seals learning into qualifications that are recognizable, transferable, and usable to gain and sustain employment and continue education. The U.S. needs a postsecondary system that captures and validates uncouneted learning to enable all individuals to be recognized for what they know and can do.

The differentials of employment and income between those who do/do not have a college degree are significant. For too many learners, the only postsecondary credentials that count for employment are degrees. This focus on degrees limits those who attend college but do not earn a degree, as well as those who've acquired skills and knowledge through life and work experience — often treating them as if they have no postsecondary-level learning. Contemporary issues have increased these disparities, with millions needing to upskill and reskill to remain or become employed.

### PRINCIPLES

Incremental credentials should:

- **Increase equity and inclusion.** *Credential As You Go* centers on a commitment to use incremental credentials to increase postsecondary educational accessibility, attainment, and employment opportunities for all learners, especially those historically underserved by race/ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and income.
- **Be understandable and inclusive.** Incremental postsecondary credentials should reflect what holders know and can do, making them easy to understand for all audiences, including learners, employers, educators, workforce agencies, accreditors, and policymakers.

- **Be trusted.** Users must be able to rely on the representations of credentials, including their accuracy in documenting the credential holder’s knowledge and skills and the usability of the credential to meet goals.
- **Carry value.** Each incremental credential should carry value in both finding employment and counting towards further learning.
- **Be interconnected.** Users of credentials (e.g., employers, educational institutions, learners, advisors), should understand how credentials connect and see multiple pathways to increase career and economic mobility.
- **Be incorporated into technology solutions.** Initiatives creating interoperable data standards and tools (e.g., enterprise systems/unit record data/auditing, portable comprehensive learner records, national collection systems, learning management systems) should include and embrace incremental credentialing.
- **Be founded in informed development by a community of stakeholders.** Diverse stakeholder engagement from faculty, student services, employers, practitioners, and learners, is crucial to developing high-quality incremental credentials based on evidence of the need and purpose for the credentials.
- **Be affordable.** Cost should not be a barrier to learners earning incremental credentials.
- **Be forward-relevant.** The design of incremental credentials should reflect the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce by expanding higher education’s contributions to workforce development.

## DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Eight bodies of work fall under the *Credential As You Go* “umbrella.”

