



CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO

Mission & Vision

MISSION

The mission of Credential As You Go is to 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.

WHY DOES CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO MATTER?

Credential As You Go embraces and aligns 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 uncounted learning to enable all individuals to be recognized for what they know and can do.

[CREDENTIALASYOUGO.ORG](https://credentialasyougo.org)

CONTEXT

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.

Credential As You Go focuses on nine bodies of work to achieve the mission & vision:





CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO

Objective & Principles

The Objective and Principles are part of the national initiative Cornerstones.

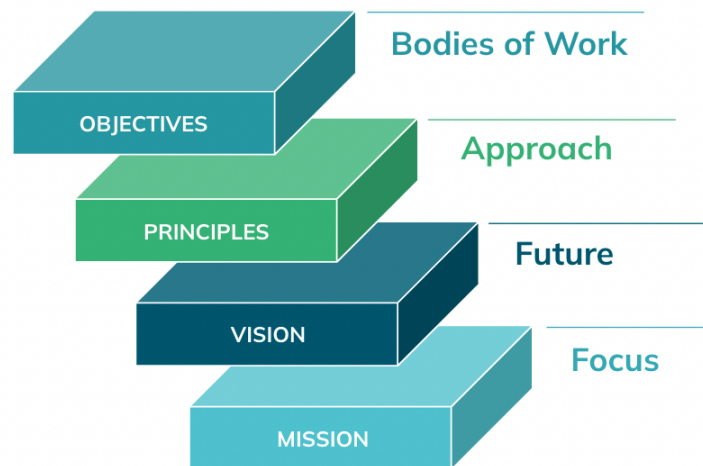
OBJECTIVE

To transform the U.S. legacy degree system to a nationally recognized incremental credentialing system.

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 21st Century workforce by expanding higher education's contributions to workforce development.



CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO

Incremental Credentials

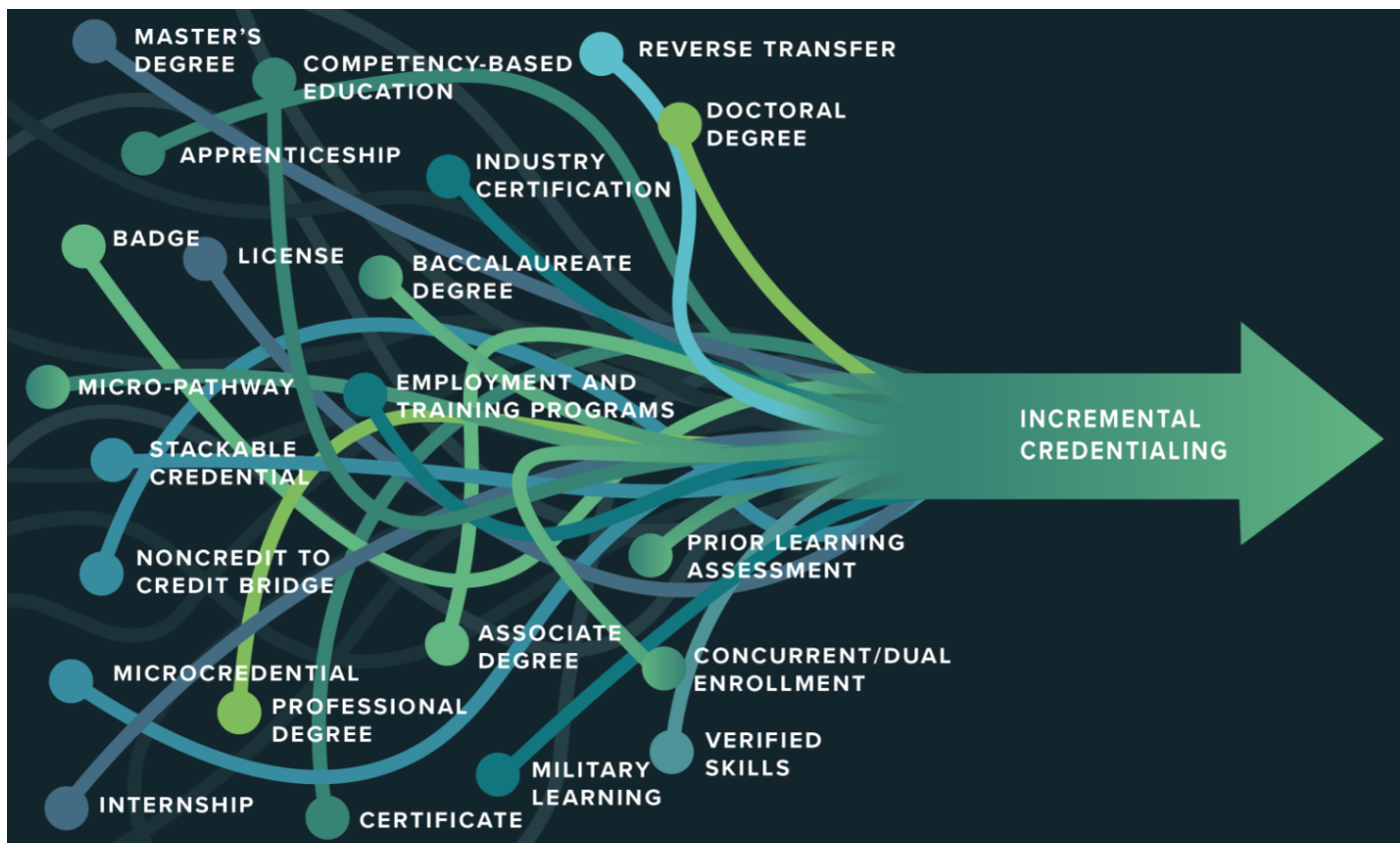
WHAT ARE INCREMENTAL CREDENTIALS?

Credential As You Go uses the term, “Incremental Credentials” to refer to all types of credentials that formally document learning, including: certificates, badges, microcredentials, degrees, apprenticeships, and other non-degree credentials. Incremental Credentials capture learning acquired along the learning pathway, and formally recognize and connect that learning to a larger context of work and schooling. Incremental credentials can be: non-credit and credit-bearing, undergraduate and graduate level in higher education or at any level in industry any size, from small units of learning through degrees.

There are many terms being used to describe aspects of the learn-and-work ecosystem.

As part of the Credential As You Go initiative, we have developed a document containing 43+ terms, in the “*Credential As You Go Dictionary*.” The dictionary is located on the website under Tool & Resources.

We encourage you to explore this document -- and hope this will help us all develop a common language around incremental credentials.





CREDENTIAL AS YOU GO

Credentialing Framework

WHAT IS THE INCREMENTAL CREDENTIALING FRAMEWORK?

The incremental credentialing process formally credentials learning that individuals acquire along the way so that they can be recognized for employment and further education. The framework provides six approaches to developing and implementing incremental credentials.

- **LEARN AS YOU GO**

Credentials prepare individuals for upskilling, reskilling, and/or developing new skills in the workplace and academic disciplinary areas. Individuals often seek these credentials without intending at that time to pursue a longer-term certificate or degree. Credentials can stand on their own or be connected to others, including degrees.

- **SPECIALIZE AS YOU GO**

Credentials can prepare individuals for specializations in the workplace and in academic disciplines. They may or may not be connected to other credentials. Individuals seek these credentials to add advanced learning to more traditional certificate or degrees, often to improve employment prospects.

- **STACK AS YOU GO**

Credentials purposefully stack into other credentials, forming a credentialing pathway. These credentials can be non-credit, microcredentials, certificates, skills badges, licenses, certifications, degrees, and other types. These credentials are purposefully planned to stack and offer transparent choices to learners.



- **TRANSFER AS YOU GO**

Credentials are built to transfer across higher education institutions and/or academic programs. They may be built sequentially, leading to the next-level credential (e.g., non-credit to credit, associate to bachelor's), or across institutions or programs at the same level. Transfer credentials provide potential cost-sharing when they can be offered across institutions or programs.

- **PARTNER AS YOU GO**

Credentials prepare individuals for employment, as well as work-focused credentials are accepted into or embedded within credentialing pathways. These credentials often are developed in conjunction with business/industry partner(s), and they may or may not be connected to a degree or certificate program.

- **RETRO AWARD AS YOU GO**

Credentials are awarded for learning already acquired but not yet credentialed. They often target adult learners with some college and no credential and sometimes recognize learning “milestones” that are reached before completing a degree (e.g., general education).