

**Mississippi Department of Employment Security  
State Policy Number 15  
Certificates and Credentials  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

**1. Scope and Purpose:**

This policy addresses reporting certificates and credentials toward Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) federal common measures for WIOA Title I-B adult, dislocated workers, and youth activities formula grants.

**2. Background:**

WIOA Section 116 Performance Accountability System establishes the primary indicators of performance that apply to WIOA Title I-B programs serving adult, dislocated workers, and youth. The measure used to determine WIOA Credential Attainment Rate:

# of participants who exited that were enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program and obtained a recognized postsecondary credential during the program or within one year after exit

PLUS

# of participants who exited that were in a secondary education program and who obtained a secondary education diploma or its equivalent during the program or within one year after exit AND employed or enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit

---

# of participants who exited and were in a postsecondary education or training program

PLUS

# of participants who exited and were in a secondary education program (at or above 9<sup>th</sup> grade level) without a secondary diploma or equivalent

Training and Employment Guidance Letter Number (TEGL) 15-10 provides guidance and strategies to both increase the rate of credential attainment among workforce program participants and improve the quality of those credentials. The intent of TEGL 15-10 is to ensure that certificates/credentials measure the attainment of technical or occupational skills and that the performance reporting is consistent across the states.

**3. Defining Credentials**

**a. Definition**

A “recognized postsecondary credential” is defined in WIOA sec. 3(52) as “a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate

of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.”

A credential is awarded in recognition of an individual’s attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation. These technical or occupational skills are based on standards developed or endorsed by employers.

## **b. Types of Institutions That May Award Credentials**

### **Federal Requirements**

The new federal definition sets standards for the types of institutions and training organizations that may award certificates that count toward WIOA Title 1-B performance measures.

- A state educational agency or state agency responsible for administering vocational and technical education.
- Certificates granted by institutions of higher education eligible to participate in federally funded student financial aid programs.
- Certificates granted by a professional, industry or employer organization, product manufacturer or developer using a valid and reliable assessment of an individual’s knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Certificates granted by a registered apprenticeship program.
- Certificates granted by a public regulatory agency upon completion of an individual’s fulfillment of educational, work experience, or skill requirements that are legally necessary to use an occupational title or practice an occupation or profession. Examples of public certification and licensing agencies include the Department of Health, State Board of Nursing, Massage Board, and Mississippi State Highway Patrol.
- Certificates granted by a program approved by the Department of Veteran’s Affairs to offer education benefits to veterans and other eligible persons.
- Certificates granted by Job Corp centers.
- Certificates granted by institutions of higher education controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by the governing body of an Indian tribe or tribes.

## **c. Credential Categories**

Certificates reportable to the U.S. DOL under the common measures policy will be recorded in OESS and in participant files used for validation of federal reports.

Certificates must be recorded in the categories reportable to the U.S. DOL, which currently include:

- High School Diploma
- GED
- AA or AS Diploma/Degree
- BA or BS Diploma/Degree
- Occupational Skills License
- Occupational Skills Certificate  
(see section 6 for further information)
- Other Recognized Diploma, Degree or Certificate  
Under common measure rules, the only types of other recognized diplomas, degrees, or certificates, which should be reportable, are:
  - Master's Degrees,
  - Doctorate Degrees, and
  - Apprenticeship completions.

#### **4. Certificates Counted Toward Federal Performance Measures**

To be counted toward credential attainment:

- a certificate must be issued by an organization that meets the federal and/or state definition of an institution or training provider that may issue certificates. Those providers are listed in Section 3(b);  
AND
- measure technical or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation;  
OR
- An occupational skills license granted by a state licensing or regulatory bodies and required as a condition of practicing an occupation. These include cosmetology licenses; massage licenses, commercial driver's licenses, nursing licenses, and other such licenses.

Other sources of acceptable occupational skills certificates are:

- Clearinghouses of industry skill certificates being developed for use in skill assessments in vocational education provided by the MS Department of Education.
- State or regional employer associations that have developed skill standards, methods of testing to determine that job seekers meet those standards, and issue certificates to those meeting standards.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) testing of operator skills for the operation of equipment.
- Certificates of training completion required by OSHA or forklift operators, or other workers as a condition of performing work in an occupation.

The credential obtained is not required to be WIOA-funded or based on services provided by an eligible training provider.

## **5. Reporting Credentials in OESS**

Credentials are keyed in the Academic History on the Participant Profile in OESS by adding a new academic record. All required criteria noted with an asterisk must be completed on this screen. Credentials are selected from the “Degree Attempted” drop down menu.

## **6. Credentials Not Found in OESS**

A process for requesting occupational skills certificates not currently listed in OESS is under development. All requests will be reviewed for approval using the new process, once it is established.

The Federal Departments will issue joint guidance that further defines what constitutes an acceptable credential for the credential attainment rate numerator, including guidance regarding an acceptable industry recognized certificate or certification and definitions for each type of credential. The Departments have not provided a threshold for participation in education or training programs for inclusion in the indicator. The Departments will provide further program-specific guidance on what constitutes education or training for inclusion in the credential attainment rate indicator for purpose of core programs.

## **7. Data Validation**

Federal data element validation rules and procedures require that the type of certificate reported in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Participant Integrated Record Layout (WIOAPIRL) files and counted toward federal performance measures must be validated by reviewing federally acceptable source documentation. Source documentation must be contained in a participant’s case file. Acceptable federal source documentation maintained in a case file can vary from program year to program year, although transcripts and actual copies of certificates or diplomas have been part of the list of acceptable sources for the past several years. The date on which certificates or licenses were awarded should be recorded in OESS. Dates are needed to determine whether the certificate was awarded within the proper time frames to be counted toward performance results.

## **8. Credentials that Do Not Count Toward Federal Common Measures Certificate Rates**

To be counted, certificates and credentials should be necessary and sufficient to performing a job, not just necessary. For example, some jobs require that the holder have a non-commercial driver’s license or a first-aid card. However, such ancillary credentials do not normally indicate that one is qualified to perform the job.

Please note that job seekers may be able to obtain countable occupational skills certificates after short-term intensive services. The occupational skills certificate, once approved, is countable toward federal performance measures. Completion of the short-term intensive services, by itself, is not countable toward federal performance measures.

Some credentials that have been approved by Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) prior to this policy do not count toward federal common measures.

- Certificates awarded by LWDB and their providers of youth services do NOT count.
- Work readiness certificates as a stand-alone activity also do NOT count.

Certificates awarded by LWDB and work readiness certificate do not document measurable, technical, or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation.

Credential refers to a verification of qualification or competency issued to an individual by a third party with the relevant authority or jurisdiction to issue such credentials.

#### **9. References:**

- WIOA Sec. 3(52)
- WIOA Section 116, Performance Accountability System
- U.S. DOL TEGL No. 15-10
- WIOA; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; Final Rule

#### **10. Action:**

All programs and activities funded in whole or in part under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are required to comply with this policy. LWDB and their contractors should distribute this policy broadly throughout the system to ensure that staff is familiar with its content and requirements.

#### **11. Effective Date:**

This policy shall be effective immediately.

  
Jacqueline A. Turner  
Deputy Executive Director, CFO