

Introduction



WHAT IS A CREDENTIAL?

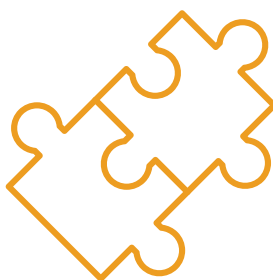
A credential is a formal way to say you have demonstrated skills and you have met a specific level. A common one is a high school diploma. Another common credential is a drivers' license. If someone has a driver's license it means they have the demonstrated skills to drive a car.



HOW CREDENTIALS COULD HELP YOU?

Plain and simple - they can help you get jobs and the more you have, the more types of jobs are open to you. Credentials show that you are qualified and an employer knows that.

In the big picture it means you may be able to get a job that is stable and higher paying. Credentials are not the only way you can demonstrate skills and experience but they definitely open up options and opportunities.



IS IT A GOOD FIT FOR ME?

There are many different types of credential programs available, but all require a commitment. To see what is the best program requires understanding the program and whether you have the time and drive it will take for you to complete the program.

HOW THIS GUIDE CAN HELP

This guide is divided into two sections. The first is to help understand some important differences in credential programs and the second includes questions for you to use to learn more about specific programs to find the best fit for you.

CERTIFICATES + CERTIFICATIONS



WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE?

A certificate is a document that you receive after you complete a course or training by an institution or organization.

For instance, the MEP may give a certificate when you complete a level of English or attend a training event.

WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?

Certification is a formal way that an industry or organization says what the requirements are to be considered a credential. It is given only after a person passes an exam or demonstrates that they met the requirements.

You can only get your driver's license if you have passed a test showing that you know how to drive a car and know the rules of the road.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATION?

Places that offer certificate programs often say that if you complete their program it will give you a certification. Just remember, if that certification doesn't meet an industry standard, it might not be accepted at another place or mean anything to others.

Be informed and ask questions. If you are paying for a training or course to get a certification, make sure that what you will get at the end is something you can use.

Some certification exams will require legal documentation or qualifications that some migratory students may not have - so it is important to ask questions and make sure the program you are doing is the right fit.



APPRENTICESHIPS + INTERNSHIPS

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship is an opportunity for paid work experiences and application of classroom instruction in a particular industry. This can be done on-the-job (OTJ) and/or in a practice setting and is treated like a job.

Many apprenticeships are listed with the U.S. Department of Labor showing you that their program meets national quality standards.

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship involves a short time commitment and is usually unpaid. It gives you work experience that allows you to gain beginning level experience or work on a specific project. It also lets you try something out to see if you like it.

An internship is a shared benefit because you get learning experience and the employer gets free or low cost workers.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN APPRENTICESHIP AND INTERNSHIP?

The main differences can be the amount of time and whether or not you are getting paid. Internships are usually short-term (1-3 months), not every day, and usually unpaid. Apprenticeships are usually long term (1+ year) and usually include a wage.

An apprenticeship has a mentor/supervisor, someone who is teaching the apprentice and working with them every day. It also leads to a progression of skill-based tasks with the goal that you will be able to do the job yourself by the end of the apprenticeship.

An internship usually focuses on a variety of beginning skills instead of one skill that becomes more and more difficult. An intern might work with a lot of different supervisors. It can be more like a buffet meal where you can try a bunch of different things to see what you like and what you are good at doing.



How to find a program that is right for you

This guide is to help you learn more and make decisions about programs that can help you grow. To make a good decision, you want as much information as you can get to help you. This next section has questions - both for you to ask yourself and questions to ask about the programs.

Don't forget - your MEP provider can help you with all of this!

DOES IMMIGRATION STATUS MATTER?

Short answer? Sometimes- so it is important to ask before you start.

Many work programs are funded by the Department of Labor- which requires participants to be a citizen, permanent resident, and/or have work permits.

Some programs require you to take an exam at the end of the program, and it might require a specific identification card.

DOES THIS FIT IN WITH THE OTHER PARTS OF MY LIFE?

Whenever you start something new there will be a change in your day-to-day schedule.

Can you make those changes so you can stay with the program?

Do those changes impact others in your life (family, kids, roommates)?

CAN I WORK AT THE SAME TIME?

There are three parts to answering this question.

#1 What is the time commitment of the program? How long does it take to finish and how often does it meet?

#2 Can I do this program on my own time or is there a set schedule that I have to be there?

#3 Can I afford, both in the time and possibly working less, to complete this program?

Information Gathering Worksheet

AGENCY NAME: _____

PROGRAM NAME: _____

PROGRAM CONTACT: _____

MOBILITY

1. How long will it take me to complete this program? How many days/hours a week do I need to have?
2. If I have to move before I finish the program, can I take what I have done so far and be able to continue at another program?
3. Is there a remote option to participate in this program?
4. Is there a residency requirement to participate in this program?

IMMIGRATION STATUS

1. Are there any immigration documents needed to participate in the program?
2. Is there an exam at the end of the program? If yes, are there any documents I have to have to take that exam?
3. If immigration status is a potential issue, are there other ways that would allow someone undocumented to be able to participate in this program?
4. Will there be a need for tax forms, Social Security number, or FAFSA to be used at any time?

Information Gathering Worksheet

COST

1. Do I need to pay for anything to participate in the program?
2. If there is a cost to the program, are there any waivers, scholarships, or other ways to reduce the cost?
3. If there is a cost to the program, if a participant qualifies for free/reduced price school meals, would that help in reducing the fees?
4. Are there supports available to offset other costs that I need to pay for to participate, such as childcare, transportation, technology, etc?

PRIOR EDUCATION

1. What are the education requirements to be in the program?
2. Is there an entry placement test?
3. If academic documents are required: What can I do if I did not attend school in the United States and/or cannot get documents where I attended school last?

Information Gathering Worksheet

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

1. Are the programs/courses available in different languages or only in English?
2. Is there a particular level of English ability that I need to be in the program? Is this both written and spoken proficiency?
3. Do I have to take an exam to demonstrate my English proficiency?

OTHER QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION GATHERED

TECHNOLOGY

Do I need to have a computer to participate? If I don't have one and/or don't know how to use a computer, is there help?

INTERNET ACCESS

Do I need to have internet access at home? Can I use my phone as a hotspot? Is there assistance if I don't have reliable internet?

OUTSIDE OF PROGRAM TIME NEEDED

To complete this program, does it just require me to come during the program or do I need to be able to dedicate time outside of the program? How much time? Can I work while attending this program?

CHILDCARE

If I have children, is there flexibility for me to deal with my children's schedules? Is there childcare assistance?



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