

CREDENTIALS AND HOW TO ACCESS THEM

Provider Version

Introduction



Credential/certification programs offer powerful opportunities to engage students. These programs can stand alone or be integrated as part of a high school or college education. They can be offered via a school district, through other local municipal offices, or through non-profit organizations. They may be open to a variety of students or be highly restrictive, and services often fully depend on what state or region in which the student lives.

It is important to understand the different programs and how they are funded, as these details usually determine who can and cannot participate. This knowledge will help MEP staff develop strong collaborations and partnerships and make appropriate referrals to credential/certification programs. The state-specific details of what each program offers and requires is beyond the scope of this guide. However, this tool will give the user enough understanding to confidently contact their local agencies that offer credential/certification programming. It will also develop the user's ability to ask the questions necessary to determine whether a specific credential/certification program is a good fit for migratory students in their area.

This guide begins with some basic definitions of terms used in many different credential/certification programs. It then goes through some general programs that focus on career and technical education and alternative pathways to completing one's high school degree. Next it transitions to providing an overview of key national initiatives and funding sources, which are important to ensure the best fit for a migratory student. Lastly are guiding questions to help MEP staff ask the important questions of a potential partner agency/program and a worksheet that can be used for initial conversations/explorations. This step can make sure that the MEP has the right information to make the best program match.

Throughout the guide are sections for notes that are designed for the user to make note of the local agencies' information. These sections should be utilized by MEP staff in order to use this guide as an active/live document that will guide the effort to connect migratory youth with the most appropriate programs.

General Program Definitions

WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE?

A certificate is awarded after the successful completion of educational or vocational training by a particular institution or organization. For instance, this could be provided by the MEP when a student attends a certain number of English classes or completes a course.

WHAT IS A CERTIFICATION?

Certification is the legal approval of a professional for job eligibility by an industry or standard-setting organization. Certification is granted only after the person passes an assessment that meets the requirements of the organization granting the certification.

One example is the American Red Cross First Aid and CPR Certifications. A person may take a first aid class offered by the American Red Cross and then take an exam to demonstrate their first aid knowledge. If they successfully demonstrate their abilities, they receive the First Aid Certification.

Another example of a certification is an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) course, such as the OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Outreach Training Program offered through a partnership between Fort Scott Community College and iSOSY. Students who complete the coursework (offered in both English and Spanish) will earn a nationally-recognized certification from the Department of Labor, enabling them to have more options in their employment. Certification courses are tuition-based and, depending on the institution/agency offering the course, legal status may not be a requirement.

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

Organizations that offer certificate programs often incorrectly call them certification programs. Be informed and ask exactly what they are providing at the conclusion of the course or training. Some certification exams will require documentation or qualifications that some migratory students may not have.



WHAT IS A CREDENTIAL?

The term credential(s) is a general way of referring to someone's qualifications, both academic/educational as well as work experience. Academic credentials are usually diplomas, degrees, or specialized classes that someone has completed. Work experience can be specific jobs/skills, certifications, or licenses that someone has earned or experienced. Credentials are usually documented on a resume or CV.

WHAT IS A LICENSE?

A license is legally required for a worker to participate in certain occupations and must be periodically renewed. Some examples are Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL) for truck drivers and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) designation for nurses. Exams and a specific level of training and experience are required to obtain a license.

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship includes opportunities for paid work experiences and application of classroom instruction in a particular industry. This can be done via on-the-job (OTJ) experiences and/or in a lab/simulation setting. Participants can end up with a portable credential. Many employers register their apprenticeship programs with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to show prospective job seekers that their apprenticeship program meets national quality standards.

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a short-term, usually unpaid work experience that allows the participant to get entry-level experience in a particular field. It is a shared benefit wherein the participant gets learning experience and the employer has a labor source for a particular project/need.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN APPRENTICESHIP AND INTERNSHIP?

While there is not a hard, fast distinction between an apprenticeship and an internship, primarily the differences can be the length of time and incident of payment. Internships are short-term (1-3 months) and tend to be unpaid, while apprenticeships are long term (1+ year) and usually include a wage. Apprenticeships tend to have a mentorship component and lead to a progression of skill-based tasks and can lead to an industry-recognized credential. An internship usually focuses on entry-level skills and not necessarily a progression of more difficult tasks.



General Program Options

CTE/CETE • VOTECH • VOC-TECH

Career Technical Education (CTE) was formerly referred to as both Trade Schools and Vocational Technical (VOTECH/VOC-TECH).

CTE includes programs that prepare learners for college and careers by providing the academics needed (as a traditional high school) as well as technical training in specialized areas designed to master a set of technical skills needed to succeed in the workforce. These programs may be offered as early as middle school, but are usually found at high schools and community-based adult education centers.

The purpose of CTE is to provide quality educational programs to the future workforce so learners can obtain high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations. Time is spent on a combination of specialized courses, hands-on work/skill training, and other opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships to prepare for a job. There can be confusion about what CTE is because there are so many types of programs and options. Programs may result in a technical certificate or prepare the learner to earn an associate degree after high school. It is important to determine the range of programming available in the schools and surrounding community that the MEP serves.

Two associations that focus specifically on CTE and offer resources for providers are ADVANCE CTE and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE):

- **ADVANCE CTE** is a national non-profit whose members are state CTE directors and leaders responsible for CTE in secondary and adult education settings throughout the United States, District of Columbia, and all US territories. They focus on big picture ideas and have a good search engine for state comparisons.
- **ACTE** is a national agency that is focused on supporting CTE educators and highlighting promising practices, exemplary programming, and professional development/lesson plan sharing.



What are the CTE programs in your area and who would you contact if one of your MEP students wanted more information?

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY (HSED)

A HSE is a nationally recognized alternative to a high school diploma that each state offers as an option for a student who, for whatever reason, is not able to graduate from high school. To earn a HSE diploma (HSED) the student must show mastery of the same academic content required to graduate from high school. As the HSED is awarded through each state's Department of Education, each state decides which option(s) it offers and what it requires. Students may demonstrate that they have met competency of the state requirements by taking a series of exams or successfully completing an alternative program.

This site outlines which options are available by state. It is strongly advised to visit the individual state's Department of Education Adult/Continuing Education website to see what options are available as well as to see if a specific state requires additional course work on top of passing an exam.

EXAM OPTIONS

Currently there are two options for exams. GED (General Educational Development) and HiSET (High School Equivalency Test). A comparison chart of these two exams is on the following page.

NON-EXAM OPTIONS

In some states, alternative pathways to obtaining a high school diploma may be offered. Two common alternative pathways are high school completion (HSC) programs and the National External Diploma Program.

HSC programs allow academically-ready adult learners to participate in a flexible program and complete the necessary course work to earn high school credits and receive an actual high school diploma instead of an equivalency. The student needs to demonstrate that they have met academic abilities through a review of their high school transcript, completion of an adult basic education program, and/or a placement test. This program is a prescribed study plan to earn specific credits and has tutoring and counseling support.

The **National External Diploma Program (NEDP)** offered through CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) is designed for adults and OSY to apply skills from life and work experiences through a competency-based structure. Students have the opportunity to study and practice a range of tasks/activities set to a particular competency and then demonstrate mastery of that competency. The competencies are both academic and college/career focused and allow the students to complete assignments at home online, at their own pace, and to work with tutors and counselors when needed [see [competencies list here](#)]. A student's competency is assessed through proctored checks with multiple opportunities to demonstrate the mastery of the required skills and knowledge to earn a high school diploma.

What are the options for HSE Exam?

	GED General Education Development Exam	HiSET High School Equivalency Test
Format of test	computer	- computer - paper
Number of sections	4	5
Type of sections	- math - social studies - science - language arts	- math - social studies - science - reading - writing
Question type	- extended response - drag-and-drop - drop-down - fill-in-the-blank - hot spot - multiple choice - short answer	- multiple choice - essay (writing only)
Passing score (each section)	Must score 145/200 on each section to earn a passing score. A higher score may earn waivers or credit in college courses/ placement.	Minimum score is 8/20 on each of the five sections and at least 2/6 on the essay; must have a total scaled score of 45.
Languages offered (state-test-site specific)	- English - Spanish - French	- English - Spanish
Published	Pearson + ACE	ETS

Basic comparisons of the exams are demonstrated in this chart. Be advised that the eligibility requirements to take the test offered vary from state to state. These include residency, format, languages offered, etc. Whether or not the results of an exam taken in another state will be transferable also varies by state. It is very important to research which exams are offered and what the testing site requirements are.

RESOURCES TO HELP STUDENTS ON A PATHWAY TO OBTAINING THEIR HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA (HSED)

HSED PATHWAYS GUIDE FROM iSOSY

Frequently OSY express an interest in working toward their HSED but there are not existing and/or appropriate programs and supports for them. The student may also not have the academic levels and study skills necessary to enter a HSED prep program. The *Path to your HSED* guides, developed by iSOSY, are designed to help providers work with a student regardless of the student's educational experience. Each guide has general information concerning HSED and then is divided into four sections based on academic experience. There are links to materials, activities such as goal setting, student profiles, and program examples.

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM (HEP)

HEP is an educational program funded through grants from the US DOE's Office of Migrant Education (OME). The projects are offered through universities, colleges, and non-profit organizations throughout the US and Puerto Rico. HEP helps migratory and seasonal farmworkers and their immediate family members who are 16 years of age or older and not currently enrolled in school to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma and subsequently to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training. Refer to this [list of the current HEP programs](#).

A student is eligible for HEP if they meet one of the following criteria:

- They or their immediate family members have engaged in migrant or seasonal farm work for at least 75 days in the last 24 months
- They have participated or been eligible to participate in NFJP
- They were eligible to participate in the Title C Migrant Education Program within the last 24 months



What are the options for HSED in your state?
Does your state have a HEP program?

National Initiatives/ Funding Sources

WHAT IS THE PERKINS PROGRAM?

The Carl Perkins Act provides the main source of federal funding for CTE programs at all levels. The latest version of Perkins is The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (2018). It is administered by the US Department of Education with the purpose to help support academic, career, and technical employability skills.

[Perkins Fact Sheet \(Immigration Forum\)](#)

WHAT IS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Workforce Development includes employment initiatives primarily funded by the US Department of Labor, but also by state and local government agencies, to train people for success in the workplace. Most areas have a Workforce Development agency through the federal government that offers unemployment benefit processing and job support. The range of programs and eligibility is fully dependent on where one lives. [Visit here](#) for a general list of program areas that Workforce Development supports. There is also the [Workforce GPS](#) to find technical assistance and regional/local offices and [Career One Stop](#) for career exploration and training/job search engines.

WHAT IS THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)?

WIOA provides funding through the US Department of Labor that targets young adults and those with significant barriers to employment to prepare them to access high-quality jobs and careers that then strengthen and improve the workforce system. Services include career training programs in pathways, adult education (including learning English), and literacy. The National Farmworkers Job Program (see next page) is funded through WIOA.

WIOA's specific focus assists both out-of-school and in-school youth who are facing barriers to employment (English language learners, dropouts, homeless, and those who are deficient in basic skills) to prepare for postsecondary education and employment opportunities, as well as attain educational and/or skills training credentials. WIOA funding is divided into four divisions but the first two titles are the most relevant for MEP students: WIOA Title I (workforce) and WIOA Title II (adult education). It is important for MEP providers to determine which WIOA funding is being used as WIOA Title I funded programs require proof of immigration status or employment authorization while WIOA Title II funded programs do not.

[WIOA Fact Sheet \(Immigration Forum\)](#)



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP)?

The NFJP provides career training, housing assistance, youth services, and other assistance to help retain/upgrade agricultural jobs and skills, including the acquisition of new skills. WIOA Title I grants are awarded to community-based agencies that assist migratory and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents. It is one of the large programs funded through WIOA Title I and requires documentation. The specific eligibility qualifications differ from the MEP and NFJP participation may be limited based on immigration status and proof of family income. For example, H2A visa workers are not eligible for the NFJP. In addition, all participating males between the ages of 18-25 must be registered with the US Military Selective Service. NFJP is a great program with strong resources but eligibility may be a major issue for many MEP students.

NFJP Fact Sheet (Department of Labor)



**What is your state's NFJP program organization?
Who would you contact at that program to work together?**

WHAT IS YOUTHBUILD?

YouthBuild is a non-profit agency that has national and international programs supporting the belief that every young person has goals and aspirations that can be achieved if given the resources and a champion to help them make it happen. The program is funded through a range of partnerships including federal funding through the US Departments of Labor and Housing and Urban Development. It serves young people between the ages of 16-24 who do not have a high school diploma and lack financial resources. Programs differ based on location but may include tutoring, study skills training, career exploration and development, and recovery activities leading to a high school diploma or HSE. Each YouthBuild program is different as it is designed to fit the needs of the youth in a specific community. Visit the [Searchable Map](#) to see if there is a program in your area and contact the programs directly to learn enrollment requirements and program services available. Individual locations and funding sources determine whether a participant must be a citizen, legal resident, permission to work, or may be undocumented.



**Are there YouthBuild programs in your area?
Who would you contact to refer a student to the program?**

WHAT IS THE JOB CORPS?

Job Corps is a national, tuition-free, residential career training program funded by the US Department of Labor. Participants have up to three years to master technical skills in key industries as well as work to complete their high school education. There are supports to address potential barriers, such as help finding employment, housing, health services, childcare, and reliable transportation. The program assists graduates to enter the workforce, pursue a higher education diploma, or join the military. Current focus for Job Corps programs include: manufacturing, automotive/machine repair, construction, finance/business, healthcare, homeland security, renewable energy, and transportation. Job Corps is only available to US citizens or those with legal residency. Visit the [Job Corps Program Locator](#) to find the closest Job Corps agency in the area.



What is your Job Corps Program agency and who would you contact there?

WHAT IS GATEWAY TO COLLEGE?

Gateway to College is a national initiative of partnerships between school districts and institutes of higher learning (usually community colleges) that provide a supportive pathway for disconnected students to earn a high school diploma while also earning a postsecondary credential. The programs offer both academic and support services to help each student address the barriers that have prevented them from being successful in traditional high school while also building confidence and supporting their self-sufficiency. This helps form a confident student with strong study and life skills in addition to completing their high school degree and earning college credits. Visit the [Gateway to College Locations](#) website to see if there is a Gateway to College program in the local area. This program is open to all students who qualify for K-12 education.



**Are there any of your school districts that offer Gateway to College and if yes, who are the college partners?
Who do you contact for more information?**

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions are intended to help students make informed decisions based on mobility, immigration status, cost, education, and language requirements. These questions are a starting point for a more in-depth conversation with the program/agency with which the MEP is looking to refer and collaborate. These questions are not intended to be used as a survey of a program and are not all-encompassing. Also included is "food for thought" concerning how MEPs can potentially use MEP funds and resources to contribute to a successful partnership and student success.

MOBILITY

1. What is the usual amount of time that it takes someone to complete this program?
2. Is there any transferability between one program to another if someone moves before they complete the program?
3. Is there a remote option to participate?
4. Is there a residency requirement?

IMMIGRATION STATUS

1. What are the documents that are required to apply for the program?
2. If the program has a certification process or a final exam, what are the documents required to take that certification/exam?
3. Are there multiple lines of funding for a program that would allow someone undocumented to be able to participate?
4. Will there be a need for tax forms or FAFSA to be used at any time?

COST

1. Do participants have any expenses that need to be taken into account to be able to participate in your program?
2. Are there any waivers, scholarships, or other ways to reduce the cost?
3. If a participant qualifies for free/reduced price school meals, would that help in reducing any costs?
4. Are there supports for the students to offset costs such as childcare, transportation, technology, etc?

Food for thought: How can MEP funds be used to address any barriers that will stop someone from participation? For example, if a program is remote but does not provide the technology right away, can MEP loan the technology to fill that gap? What referrals can be put in place if the participant needs childcare or transportation?

Guiding Questions

EDUCATION LEVELS

1. What are the minimal education requirements to enter? Is documentation needed?
2. Is there a placement test for admission?
3. Are there alternative assessments given for those who did not attend school in the United States and/or cannot get any documents from their home country or where they attended school last?
4. Are there expected or implied study/organizational/test-taking skills that students should be starting with or is this built into the program?

Food for thought: What might the MEP offer to better prepare a migratory student to enter the program?

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

1. What are the languages offered by the program?
2. Is there a particular level of English proficiency the program requires? How is this determined? Is this both written and spoken proficiency?
3. Is there an assessment given to demonstrate English proficiency?

Food for thought: Could MEP programming support/prepare the migratory student for the program through English classes?

OTHER POTENTIAL BARRIERS/ISSUES TO THINK ABOUT

TECHNOLOGY

Do students have access to the equipment that they need? Do they know how to access the technology required? Is there a support person to troubleshoot technology issues?

INTERNET ACCESS

Do they have reliable and consistent internet? Can they afford to pay for internet access for the duration of their time in the program? Is there any support for subsidizing the internet? What happens if a student does not have internet access? How many people are accessing the wifi where the student may be trying to connect for programming?

OUTSIDE OF PROGRAM TIME NEEDED

What is the actual time commitment to attend the program? Does it require just the attendance during the program time or is there time that they will need to dedicate outside of the program?

CHILDCARE

What is the student's responsibility to others? Is there flexibility for working parents who may need to deal with their children's schedules?

JOB/STUDY/LIFE BALANCE

Think about all of the areas of responsibility the student has. Can they be successful in the program and be able to meet the other responsibilities they have? Do they have external support to help address any issues/barriers?

Information Gathering Worksheet

AGENCY NAME: _____

PROGRAM NAME: _____

PROGRAM CONTACT: _____

MOBILITY

1. What is the average amount of time that it takes someone to complete this program?
2. If someone moves before they complete the program, can they take what they have done so far and be able to continue at another program?
3. Is there a remote option to participate?
4. Is there a residency requirement to participate in this program?

IMMIGRATION STATUS

1. Are there any documents that are needed to apply for the program?
2. Is there an exam at the end of the program? If yes, are there any documents required to take that certification/exam?
3. If immigration status is a potential issue, are there other ways that would allow someone undocumented to be able to participate?
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 participants have any expenses that need to be taken into account to be able to participate in the program?
2. 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 any costs?
4. Are there supports for the students to offset costs such as childcare, transportation, technology, etc?

PRIOR EDUCATION

1. What are the minimal education requirements to enter and be successful in this project?
2. Is there a required placement test?
3. Are there any alternative assessments given for those who did not attend school in the United States and/or cannot get any documents from their home country or where they attended school last?
4. Are there expected or implied study/organizational/test-taking skills (pre-requisites) that students should be starting with or are the development of these skill sets built into the program?

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 proficiency the program requires? How is this determined? Is this both written and spoken proficiency?
3. Is there an assessment given to demonstrate English proficiency?

OTHER QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION GATHERED



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