

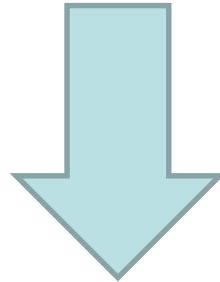
Non-Degree Credentials— What is Quality and How to Assess it?

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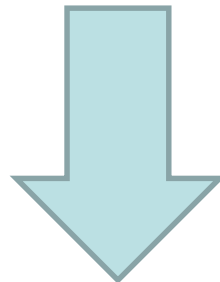
Council on Higher Education Accreditation
Washington, DC, January 29, 2020

The Rise of Non-Degree Credentials

Rapidly changing labor market



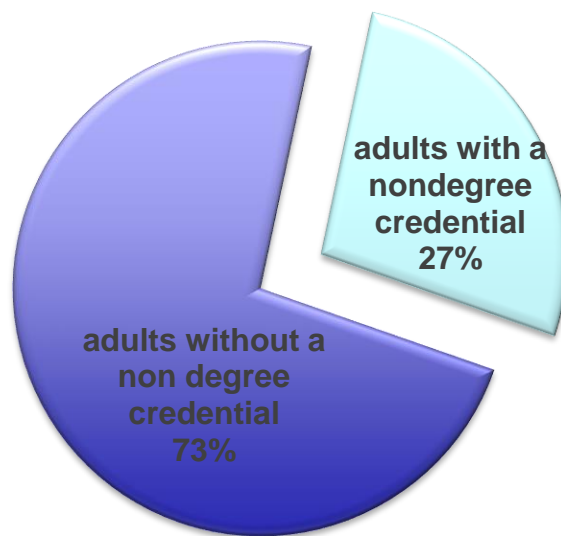
Increased need for lifelong learning, just in time training



Proliferation of different types of NDCs

Many Adults Hold NDCs

In 2016, a total of 27 percent of adults reported having a nondegree credential—a postsecondary certificate, a certification, or a license. (NCES 2017)



■ adults with a nondegree credential

■ adults without a non degree credential

Types and Definitions of Non-Degree Credentials

Type	Definition
Sub baccalaureate credit certificates	Credential awarded by an educational institution for completion of a subbaccalaureate credit educational program, usually less than one year in length (short-term and long-term credit)
Non-credit certificates	Credential awarded by an institution (educational or workplace) for completion of a noncredit educational program
Apprenticeship	Credential awarded after completion of structured educational and workplace program based on industry and occupational standards.
Industry certification	Credential awarded by an industry body or governmental agency for demonstration of skills typically via examination based on industry or occupational standards.
Occupational or professional licensure	Credential awarded by a governmental agency for demonstration of skills in a specific occupation and sometimes also completion of an educational program; often required to work in an occupation.
Badges, microcredentials	Credential awarded for completion of a short program of study or demonstration of a targeted set of skills; these are newly emerging and are still being developed.

What Do We Know About NDCs?

- Awarded by a wide range of organizations
 - Colleges, industry groups, unions, government, etc.
- Awarded based on a variety of criteria
 - Course completion, work experience, examination, etc.
- Learning occurs in many locales
 - At school, at work, informally
- Data is located in many sources
 - State data systems, industry data, national surveys

“The Wild West”

- Understanding quality of NDCs is incredibly difficult.
- There is no single system, set of standards or mechanism to help workers, employers, policymakers, and educational institutions define quality or measure it.
- Understanding which NDCs are quality varies by:
 - Geography
 - Industry
 - Consumer

What is a “Quality” NDC?

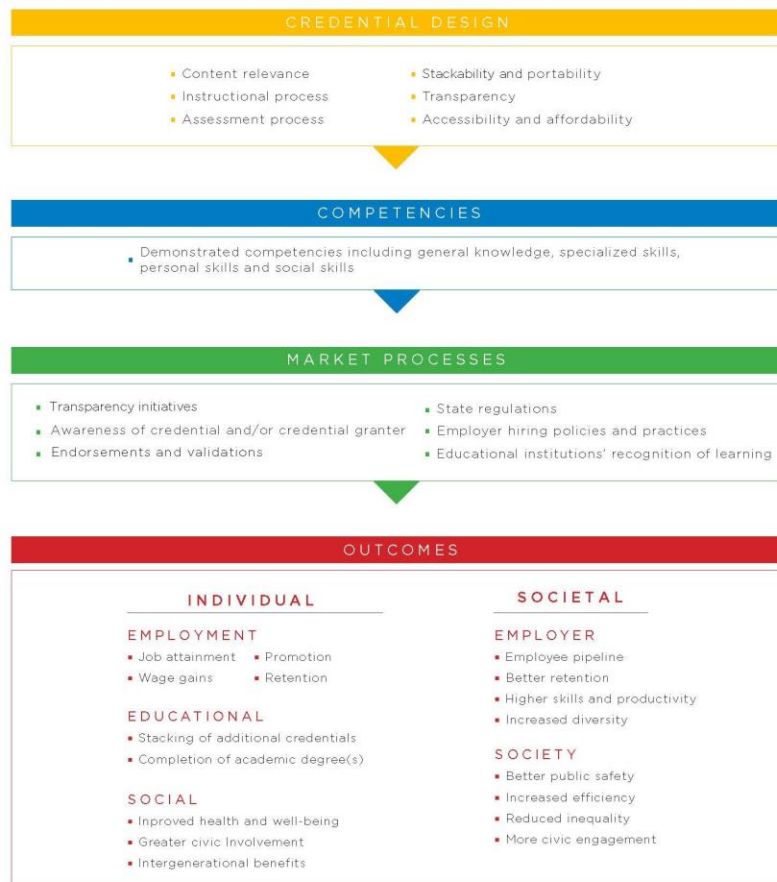
- Equity is essential to quality
- Quality from who’s perspective
 - Credential holder vs. employer vs. educational institution vs. policymaker
 - Potential tension in goals
- Potential variation based on context, e.g. industry, occupation, labor market, organization
- Conceptual framework as a guide and a diagnostic tool

Key Elements of Non-Degree Credential Quality

- *Credential design.* This element includes numerous features, usually decided on by the credential grantor, that define what a credential represents in terms of the competencies it marks and how it seeks to do so.
- *Competencies.* These are the skills and knowledge that the credential aims to represent.
- *Market Processes.* This term refers to the ways that a credential comes to be recognized and have currency in the world.
- *Outcomes.* The accumulation of competencies represented by credentials are expected to generate outcomes of value, typically in terms of the educational, employment, and social advancement of individuals, employers, and society.

Conceptual Model of Non-Degree Credential Quality

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF NON-DEGREE CREDENTIAL QUALITY



Credential Design

- Competency relevance
- Instructional process
- Assessment process – initial and ongoing
- Stackability and portability
- Transparency
- Accessibility and affordability

Competencies

- Demonstrated competencies
 - Including general knowledge, specialized skills, personal skills, and social skills

Market Processes

- Transparency initiatives
- Awareness of the credential and/or the credential grantor
- Endorsements or validations
- State regulation
- Employer hiring practice and politics
- Educational institutions recognition of learning

Outcomes

- Individual economic outcomes
- Individual educational outcomes
- Individual social outcomes
- Employer outcomes
- Societal outcomes

Implications for Policy and Practice

- Need to....
 - Create awareness of non-degree credential quality and how to measure it.
 - Collect better information on non-degree credential quality and outcomes.
 - Develop and promote systems to assess non-degree credential quality.
 - Promote and understand the use of data on non-degree credential quality.
- States are currently developing quality measures that draw from elements of this framework

Create awareness of non-degree credential quality and how to measure it

- Promote integration of NDCs into educational programs
- Engage conversations about NDCs with employers
- Promote competency-based hiring linked with NDCs
- Facilitate conversations among stakeholders about NDC quality

Collect better information on non-degree credential quality and outcomes

- Integrate into data systems across institutions
- Prompt industry to collect and report on industry certification
- Create incentives to add to tracking systems

Develop and promote systems to assess non-degree credential quality

- State reporting and rating systems
- Eligible Training Provider List
- Consumer report cards
- Credential Registry
- Assessments by educational institutions

Promote and understand the use of data on non-degree credential quality

- Examine data to guide improvements at educational institutions to value NDCs where appropriate
- Promote employer understanding and use of relevant NDCs in hiring and promotion
- Guide policy discussions to ensure NDCs are effectively used to promote economic and educational success

Existing Systems for Assessing NDC Quality

- Educational Institutions
 - Prior learning assessment
 - Competency-based learning
 - Beta Credential Framework
 - Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education
- States
 - Quality standards
 - Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)
 - Sector Strategies
 - State-Wide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)
- National efforts
 - Credential Engine
 - ANSI standards for certificate programs, continuing education
- Accreditation

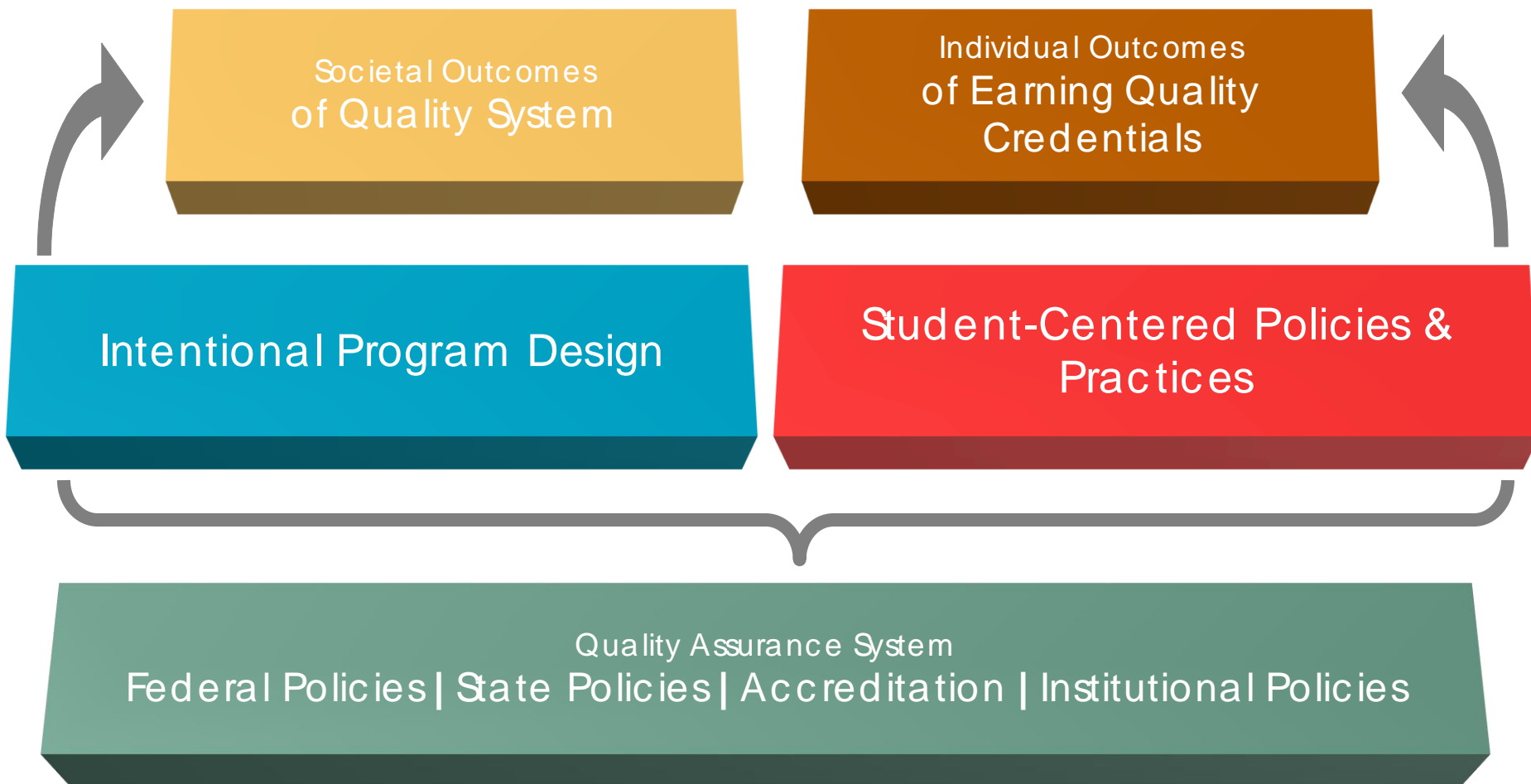
Lumina Quality Credential Task Force framework

- Outcomes for individuals and society
- Intentional design
- Student centered institutions, policies and practices

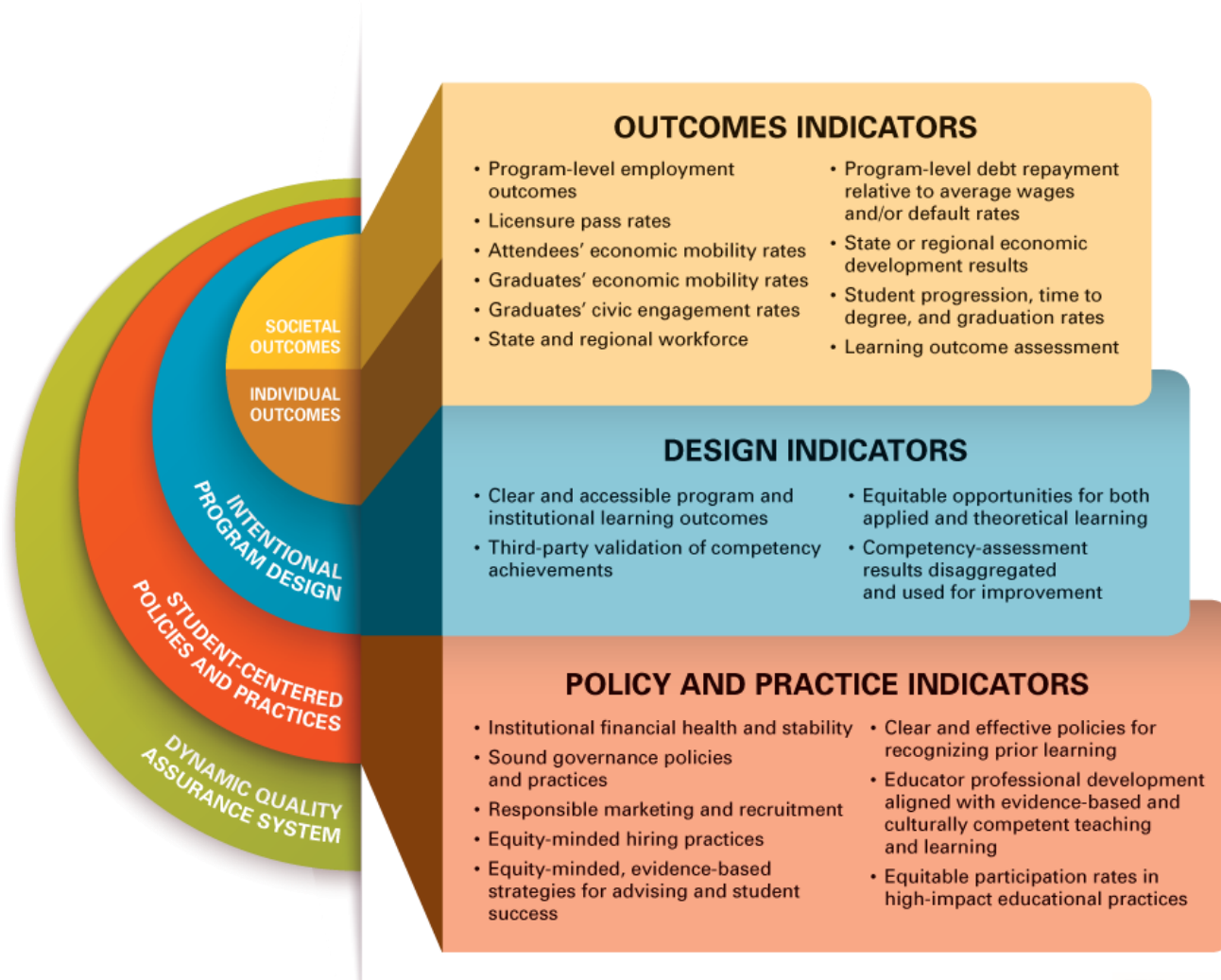
Unlocking the Nation's Potential: A Model to Advance Quality and Equity in Education Beyond High School

<https://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/unlocking-the-nations-potential>

Conceptual Model of Credential Quality



Key Indicators of New Quality Assurance System



For More Information, Contact Us.

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Download the report: smlr.rutgers.edu/NDCQuality

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