

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18b-3D-8

§18B-3D-8. West Virginia Micro-Credential Program.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) Within and outside of the classroom, students and employees often engage in project-based and experiential learning by which they attain knowledge and skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, that are essential for productive employment and effective citizenship, but are not recognized or identified through an assessment score or a course grade;

(2) Students and employees often attain the mastery of valuable skills but lack the ability to demonstrate this mastery in a manner that is meaningful or credible for school districts, charter schools, institutions of higher education, or employers;

(3) School districts, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and employers have created micro-credentialing systems in the past. In these systems, an entity that provides educational opportunities for students and adults establishes the criteria, including curriculum and competencies, and assessments for determining whether a person has acquired the necessary skills for the micro-credential. Individuals who earn the micro-credential can then share the credential with formal or informal education providers or employers or other groups that have a need for persons with the skills represented by the micro-credential;

(4) A micro-credentialing system enables individuals to earn micro-credentials from a variety of issuers and use the micro-credentials to provide a much more complete picture of the range of knowledge and skills that the individual has developed. The individual can then incorporate the micro-credentials with the individual's resume when applying for entrance into select postsecondary education programs or the workforce;

(5) For certain persons, nonprofits, and employers, especially those involved in manual labor and skilled-trades, a system of micro-credentialing may be a cost and time-effective alternative to traditional higher education formats for employee development and workforce-readiness; and

(6) State institutions of higher education can also incorporate micro-credentials into degree programs to provide students with enhanced practical skills that improve their employment prospects compared to peers.

(b) The Legislature concludes that promoting and expanding a system of micro-credentialing to document student learning and mastery of distinct skills is useful to enable students and employees to demonstrate specific skills attained either within or outside of the classroom in a manner that is credible and useful for school districts, charter schools, and state

institutions of higher education. The Legislature further finds that a standardized, credible system of micro-credentialing is a valuable component of workforce development in West Virginia.

(c) Therefore, the West Virginia Micro-Credential Program is established within the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. The Chancellor or their designee shall be responsible for developing and administering the Micro-Credential Program that shall provide at least the following:

- (1) Standards and procedures for identifying the appropriate subjects and skills for micro-credentialing and the manner in which a traditional or nontraditional student may demonstrate the level of mastery necessary to obtain a micro-credential;
- (2) Standards and procedures for the design of micro-credentials, including how the micro-credentials are validated, stored, accessed, and maintained; and
- (3) Standards and procedures for the platform for creating, maintaining, accessing, and sharing micro-credentials; and
- (4) Standards and procedures for determining the entity or entities that may store and maintain records of the micro-credential completion, along with other educational attainments and learning achievements such as post-secondary certificates and degrees, professional licenses, industry certifications, and completed apprenticeships, and protocols to protect the security of micro-credentials and other educational attainments and learning achievements and to help ensure that a student who obtains a micro-credential and other educational attainment and learning achievements controls access to their record.
- (5) Standards and procedures for verifying the completion of micro-credentials and that they lead to demonstrable, measurable improvements in workforce participation and earnings; and
- (6) Assistance to state institutions of higher education with implementing micro-credential offerings that are high-quality, transparent, aligned with workforce needs, and implemented through sound institutional processes, through increased capacity building for needs assessment, program development, marketing, student supports, documentation, and program and process improvement.

(d) The commission is authorized and empowered, as necessary in developing and implementing the Micro-Credential Program, to:

- (1) Coordinate with the Department of Commerce, Department of Education, the Professional Charter School Board, the Council for Community and Technical College Education, any institution of higher education, as that term is defined in §18B-1-2 of this code, and employers to develop joint criteria, curriculum, competencies, assessments, and class credit for specific micro-credentials within the program;

- (2) Contract with education experts and service providers to consult on and develop the program or specific micro-credentials within the program;
 - (3) Prioritize the development and deployment of micro-credentials for manual labor or skilled trade related workforce positions such as those found within the industries of construction, manufacturing, and energy;
 - (4) Utilize digital, web-based, artificial intelligence-based, hands-on, or on-the-job micro-credentials as needed to meet workforce and market demands; and
 - (5) Communicate with the Department of Commerce, employers, and industry representatives to ensure that the micro-credentials being offered respond to local and regional needs for specific workforce knowledge and skills.
- (e) The commission may propose rules in accordance with §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code, as needed, to establish and implement the Micro-Credential Program.