

**THE MISSISSIPPI PARTNERSHIP
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA**

**CERTIFICATES & CREDENTIALS
POLICY**

Revised May 21, 2026

The Mississippi Partnership Workforce Development Area Certificates & Credentials Policy

I. Scope and Purpose

This policy aligns with the MDES Office of Grant Management's Certificates and Credentials Policy and establishes statewide definitions, requirements, procedures, and documentation standards for validating, recording, and reporting credentials earned by participants in WIOA Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.

The policy ensures compliance with WIOA Sec. 116; 20 CFR Parts 677, 680, 681, and 683; TEGL 10-16 Change 3; TEGL 07-18; Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200); and all related nondiscrimination and veterans' priority requirements. These standards reflect corrective actions identified in the State's gap analysis and in federal monitoring communications, including the clarification that graduate degrees and NCRC may not be counted toward credential attainment.

This policy applies to:

- MDES as the Title I-B Grant Recipient
- Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs)
- All Title I-B subrecipients
- One-Stop Operators
- Contracted Youth Providers
- Training Providers offering programs that may result in credential attainment

II. Authority

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Sec. 3, Sec. 116
- 20 CFR Parts 677, 680, 681, 683
- TEGL 10-16 Change 3 (Credential Attainment Indicator)
- TEGL 07-18 Change 1 (Data Validation)
- PIRL Reporting Specifications
- 29 CFR Part 38 (Equal Opportunity)
- 20 CFR Part 1010 (Veterans Priority of Service)
- 2 CFR 200 & 2900 (Uniform Guidance)

III. Definitions

A. Recognized Postsecondary Credential

A credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of apprenticeship, a license recognized by a State or Federal

agency, or an associate or bachelor's degree. **Graduate degrees do not count toward WIOA credential attainment.**

B. Certificate

A document awarded upon completion of education/training with a demonstrated assessment of competency.

C. Certification

A credential awarded through an independent, third-party validation of skills (e.g., AWS, CompTIA, NCCER).

D. License

A government-issued authorization to practice an occupation.

E. Secondary Diploma or Equivalent (Youth)

A high school diploma or credential that demonstrates the same knowledge and skills as a high school graduate, recognized by the Mississippi Community Board (MCCB) for employment and postsecondary education. Note: A secondary diploma or equivalent counts only when accompanied by verified employment, military enlistment, or postsecondary enrollment within one year of exit.

F. Industry-Recognized Credential

A credential endorsed broadly by employers or industry bodies.

IV. Eligible Credential-Issuing Institution

A qualifying institution must be one of the following:

- Postsecondary institutions accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-recognized accreditor
- State Department of Education or CTE-approved institution
- Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)
- State or federal licensing agency
- Third-party certification bodies (CompTIA, AWS, NCCER, NHA, NIMS)

Verification procedures appear in Attachment A.

V. Credentials Countable for Performance

A credential is countable when it:

1. Meets the definition of a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Is earned during participation or within one year after exit;
3. Is supported by documentation meeting TEGL 07-18 standards; and
4. Is linked to education/training aligned with the participant's IEP/ISS.

Youth Secondary Diploma Requirements

The diploma/equivalency counts only if, within one year of exit, the youth is:

- employed,
- Enlisted in the military, or
- Enrolled in postsecondary education

A Credential Decision Tree is included in Attachment B to assist staff in determining if a credential is allowable for WIOA performance.

VI. Credentials not countable for performance

Non-qualifying credentials include:

- CPR / First Aid / BLS
- OSHA-10 / OSHA-30
- ServSafe Food Handler
- Employer-issued training certificates
- Attendance or participation certificates
- NCRC / WorkKeys (explicitly prohibited by statute)
- Graduate-level degrees (Master's, Doctorate)
- Any credential lacking a skills-based assessment
- CEUs and professional development hours

VII. Timing Requirements

A credential counts if earned:

- At any time during active participation, OR

- Within 365 days after exit

Exit is determined using WIOA's 90-day no-service rule and federal exit logic.

VIII. Documentation, Data Entry, & Data Validation

Acceptable Documentation (TEGL 07-18):

- Official transcript
- Certificate/diploma showing name, credential, date
- Third-party exam results
- Licensing board registry confirmation
- Apprenticeship completion documentation
- Verified digital badges (Credly, Pearson, etc.)

Data Entry (Mississippi Works)

Staff must record:

- Credential type
- Issuing authority
- Date earned
- Documentation upload
- Detailed case note
- Completed verification checklist (Appendix A)

IX. Veterans Priority of Service

Priority must be applied at:

- Point of entry
- Enrollment into credential-generating training
- Access to funding for credential attempts
- Access to testing environments

X. Nondiscrimination, Accessibility, & Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

All credential-related services must comply with 29 CFR Part 38:

- Auxiliary aids and services must be provided
- LEP language access must be ensured
- No discriminatory credential prerequisites may be imposed
- Programmatic and physical accessibility must be ensured

XI. Fiscal Requirements & Allowability

Allowable credential-related costs include:

- Tuition and required fees
- Exam fees
- License fees and required background checks
- Mandatory supplies or equipment
- One retest fee (locals may apply stricter limits)

Unallowable:

- Renewal fees unrelated to job entry
- Optional upgrades or premium versions of exams
- Personal enrichment credentials
- Employer-required onboarding credentials

XII. Roles & Responsibilities

A. The Mississippi Partnership Fiscal Agent Staff

The Mississippi Partnership Fiscal Agent Staff will:

- Ensure local policy aligns with the state policy
- Train staff and providers
- Conduct regular file reviews
- Ensure accurate reporting

B. WIOA Subrecipients & One-Stop Operators

The WIOA Subrecipients & One-Stop Operators will:

- Conduct credential verification
- Maintain documentation

- Enter data accurately
- Conduct training as needed for staff
- Ensure compliance with EO and veterans' priority requirements.

Attachment C is a Staff Training Guide that can be used by the Fiscal Agent Staff, WIOA subrecipients, and One-Stop Operators.

XIII. Monitoring

The Mississippi Partnership Fiscal Agent Staff will monitor:

- Documentation completeness
- Allowability of funding
- Youth placement requirements
- EO Compliance
- Data validation accuracy
- Subrecipient internal controls.

XIV. Error Correction Procedures

To correct an error identified by Subrecipient & One-Stop Operator:

1. Staff identifies the error
2. Staff contacts Fiscal Agent staff for assistance if needed
3. Staff makes necessary corrections in MS Works
4. Staff uploads correct documentation to be retained in the file

To correct an error identified by the Fiscal Agent:

1. Staff identifies the error.
2. Staff contacts WIOA Provider, explains needed correction and necessary action Provider staff should take
3. Provider staff makes necessary corrections in MS Works
4. Provider staff uploads correct documentation to be retained in the file
5. Provider staff notifies Fiscal Agent staff errors have been corrected.
6. Fiscal Agent Staff verifies corrections.

XV. Effective Date

This policy is effective May 21, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A	The Mississippi Partnership Credential Verification Checklist
Attachment B	Credential Decision Tree
Attachment C	Staff Training Guide

The Mississippi Partnership Credential Verification Checklist

This checklist must be completed and scanned into Imaging for every certificate or credential reported for a WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth participant.

Participant Name: _____

☐ **1. Pre-Verification**

- Credentials appear in the participant's IEP/ISS
- Credential aligns with an in-demand occupation
- Costs, if applicable, were pre-approved
- Provider eligibility verified (ETPL, if needed)

☐ **2. Accepted Proof of Credential**

- Certificate, diploma, license, transcript
- Official score report with passing result
- State licensing board printout
- Verified training provider portal documentation
- GED/HiSET official record

☐ **3. Authenticity Review**

- Check issuing agency
- Ensure participant's name matches
- Confirm credential meets WIOA's definition
- Validate digital credentials through secure links

☐ **4. Mississippi Works Entry**

- Credential name/type
- Issuer
- Date earned
- Credential/license number (if applicable)

☐ **5. Compliance Checks**

- Costs necessary & reasonable
- Documentation complete
- Verification within required timelines

☐ **6. Upload Credential & Checklist to Imaging**

- Credential proof
- Receipts/invoices if applicable
- Case note documenting verification
- Legible scan or upload

The Mississippi Partnership Credential Decision Tree

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Provider Staff should use this decision tree to determine if a credential is allowable for WIOA performance.

STEP 1 – Relevance

Is the credential tied to an in-demand occupation or career pathway?

YES: Go to **Step 2**.

NO: ● **STOP.** Not allowable.

STEP 2 – Participant Alignment

Is the credential required to meet ISS/IEP goals?

YES: Go to **Step 3**.

NO: ● **STOP.** Not allowable.

STEP 3 – Training Provider Eligibility

Is the provider on ETPL (if required)?

YES: Go to **Step 4**.

NO: ● **STOP.** Not allowable.

NOT APPLICABLE: Go to **Step 4**.

STEP 4 – Allowability of Costs

Are costs reasonable, necessary, and directly tied to credential attainment?

YES: Go to **Step 5**.

NO: ● **STOP.** Not allowable.

STEP 5 – Youth Considerations

If youth participant, does the credential support diploma completion or a career pathway goal?

YES: Go to **Step 6**.

NO: ● **STOP.** Not allowable.

NOT APPLICABLE: Go to **Step 6**

STEP 6 – Approvals

Do local approval requirements (such as cost caps or fiscal signatures) apply?

YES: Submit for approval.

NO: Proceed

OUTCOME:

If all steps pass → **Allowable credential**

The Mississippi Partnership

Staff Training Guide: Summary of Procedural Updates

This guide provides WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Provider Staff on standard procedures for documenting and reporting certificates and credentials to ensure compliance, accuracy, and consistency across all WIOA programs.

1. Overview of Key Policy Changes

- Clarified what credential costs are allowable
- Standardized verification steps statewide
- Added Youth diploma/enrollment requirements
- Introduced checklist & decision tree
- Strengthened documentation and system entry requirements

2. Staff Responsibilities

All Participants

- Link credential to in-demand occupation & ISS/IEP
- Collect and authenticate proof
- Enter attainment in Mississippi Works
- Upload documents and case note verification

Youth Participants

- Document diploma/equivalency needs
- Verify enrollment every 90 days
- Prioritize pathway-aligned credentials
- Track measurable skill gains

3. Allowability Reminders

- **Allowable:**
Tuition, fees, exam charges, mandatory tools, PPE, required screenings.
- **Not Allowable:**
Optional upgrades, non-occupational classes, employer onboarding, penalties.

4. Common Compliance Errors

- Missing credential proof
- Not recording credential in MS Works
- Costs not tied to an in-demand occupation

- Illegible or incomplete documentation

5. Required Tools

- Credential Verification Checklist
- Credential Decision Tree
- Case notes documenting decisions

6. Optional Training Exercises

- Review sample credentials for authenticity
- Practice navigating the decision tree
- Conduct mock compliance file reviews