



Serve Colorado Quality Credentialing Framework





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Colorado Workforce Landscape

According to the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC):

“Colorado is facing a skills gap that, if unaddressed, will diminish the ability of the economy to grow and limit the upward mobility of individuals throughout the state. Shifting our talent development network to embrace a competency-based approach to hiring, education, and training has been identified as a key strategy to address this gap and keep Colorado’s economy and its citizens moving forward. A competency-based approach is necessary because skills are the best predictor of a successful hiring outcome and competency-based models expand access to education opportunities beyond high school.”

The concept of work-based learning, as articulated by the CWDC, is encapsulated as follows:

“Work-based learning is a continuum of activities that occur, in part or in whole, in the workplace, providing the learner with hands-on, real world experience. It combines skill development with training opportunities and is a key strategy in Colorado for developing talent and preparing Coloradans for the workforce and evolving labor market. Work-based learning (WBL) programs are instrumental in quality career pathways that enable students and job seekers to secure industry-relevant skills, certifications, and credentials and advance to higher levels of education and employment.”

My Colorado Journey’s platform identifies the following fields as 13 vital career pathways:

1. Advanced Manufacturing
2. Agriculture & Natural Resources
3. Behavioral Health
4. Business Operations
5. Construction & Building Trades
6. Cybersecurity
7. Education
8. Green Energy
9. Healthcare
10. Information Technology
11. Public Health
12. Retail
13. Transportation

Top Jobs in Colorado are considered ones in which there is:

- Projected high net annual openings (>40)
- Above average growth rate over the last 10 years (15%)
- A living wage (defined by MIT’s living wage calculator)

Critical Occupations include jobs in:

- Healthcare, including public health and behavioral health
- Direct care
- Education

These are considered vital building blocks for Colorado and its economy.

2

AmeriCorps and Workforce Programs

Colorado AmeriCorps programs address a wide range of community needs through service projects in the impact areas of education, health, public safety, environment, climate, and economic mobility. These service projects empower individuals to develop valuable skills while making a positive impact within their communities.

AmeriCorps grantees have the opportunity to form partnerships with workforce development programs, significantly increasing their potential and reach. Members stand to gain immensely from these programs, as they can earn while acquiring new skills, gain invaluable experience, receive increased wages, access free training, and earn industry-recognized credentials. Upon completing their service, AmeriCorps members also receive a Segal Education Award, which can be utilized for furthering their education or repaying student loans.

For program partners that welcome AmeriCorps members into credentialing programs, including apprenticeships, there are numerous advantages. They receive access to a more expansive and diverse candidate pool, the ability to train members to exact specifications, increased productivity, greater retention and efficiency, as well as reduced liability costs.

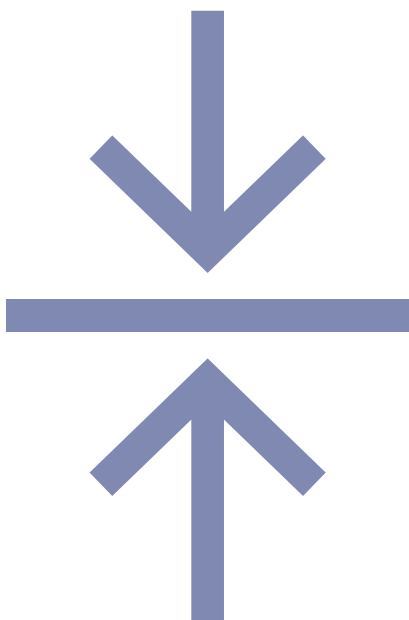
AmeriCorps and workforce development programs prioritize equipping participants with transferable skills that enhance local communities' resilience. By collaborating and coordinating efforts, AmeriCorps can create a holistic approach to workforce development that effectively caters to the needs of both individuals and employers, fostering positive social and economic improvements within communities.



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Serve Colorado Alignment

Serve Colorado empowers community-based organizations to address local needs and statewide challenges through service and volunteerism. Members serve within non-profit, government, faith-based, and tribal organizations, as well as schools, hospitals, and public lands. To better serve our communities and members across the state, Serve Colorado is enhancing its service-based learning structure and expanding career pathway program opportunities within its portfolio. As part of this effort, Serve Colorado is incorporating stackable credentials into AmeriCorps members' service terms. This is a significant opportunity to provide valuable credentials through their service commitments, especially given the increasing demand for skilled workers in various industries in Colorado, and the natural connection between AmeriCorps service and workforce development programs.



AmeriCorps members gain practical experiences that prepare them to enter the workforce, transition within their careers, or develop skills to further their education. Credentials play a crucial role in validating the skills acquired through service-based learning experiences.

The Colorado Workforce Development Council defines a career pathway program as “a clear sequence of stackable credits and credentials, combined with support services, which enables students and job seekers to secure industry-relevant skills, certifications, and credentials and advance to higher levels of education and employment in high demand occupations.” While the current service-based learning structure is fundamental to AmeriCorps, it is evident that incorporating credentialing opportunities is a crucial step in developing comprehensive career pathway programs for members.

Work-Based Learning Continuum

Learning About Work

Career awareness and exploration help individuals build awareness of the variety of careers available and provide experiences that help inform career decisions.

- Career counseling
- Career planning
- Career fairs
- Career presentations
- Industry speakers
- Informational interviews
- Mentoring
- Worksite tours
- Project-based learning

Learning Through Work

Career preparation supports career readiness and includes extended direct interaction with professionals from industry and the community.

- Clinical experiences
- Credit-for-work experiences
- Internships
- Pre-apprenticeship
- Industry-sponsored projects
- Supervised entrepreneurship experience

Learning At Work

Career training occurs at a work site and prepares individuals for employment.

- Apprenticeship
- On-the-job training
- Employee development

Education Coordinated



Business Led

Outcomes:

Skilled talent for business + meaningful careers for students and job seekers

AmeriCorps programs offer valuable learning experiences for members by facilitating professional development, exposure to various critical fields, interactions with community leaders, and specialized training, such as "Life After AmeriCorps."

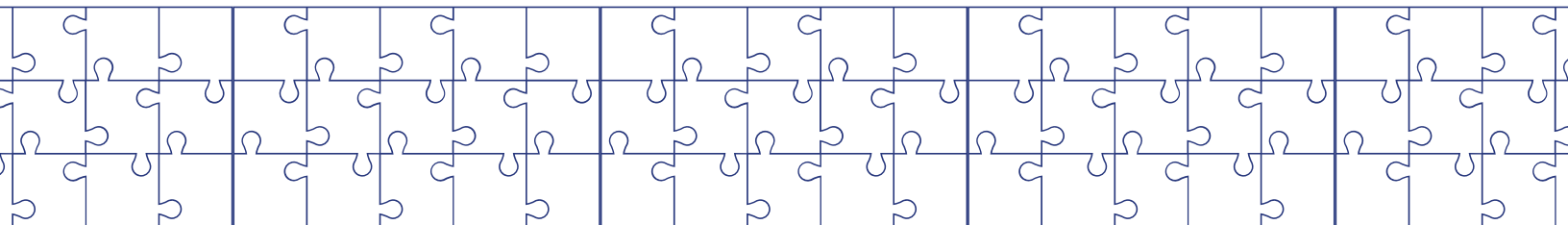
Serve Colorado is actively seeking to expand its service portfolio, enhancing opportunities for members to learn through their service and within their environments. This expansion signifies a commitment to fostering skill development and a deeper understanding of service-related professions.

It is also important to address the barriers to obtaining credentials and participating in an AmeriCorps program. To operate with an equity mindset in all programming, Serve Colorado developed a State Service Plan that places a strong emphasis on Equity and Inclusion and Developing the Future Workforce. By expanding member benefits, collaborating with partners from various state agencies and foundations, and establishing how AmeriCorps service aligns with credentialing, Serve Colorado aims to offer members both valuable experiences and recognized credentials, ultimately bridging service gaps in communities.



Through active involvement in the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) Stackable Credentials Pathways Steering Committee and contributions to the Colorado Workforce Cabinet, Serve Colorado has assessed credentials earned through AmeriCorps programs in line with the **Quality In-Demand Non-Degree Credential Framework**. This demonstrates that members can, and do, acquire high-quality certifications through their service. To further integrate credentials within the structure of AmeriCorps, Serve Colorado has identified additional criteria for evaluating and weighing credentials proposed by our programs.

To implement these credentials in our programs, Serve Colorado has established partnerships with multiple state agencies and foundations to provide training, support, and funding.

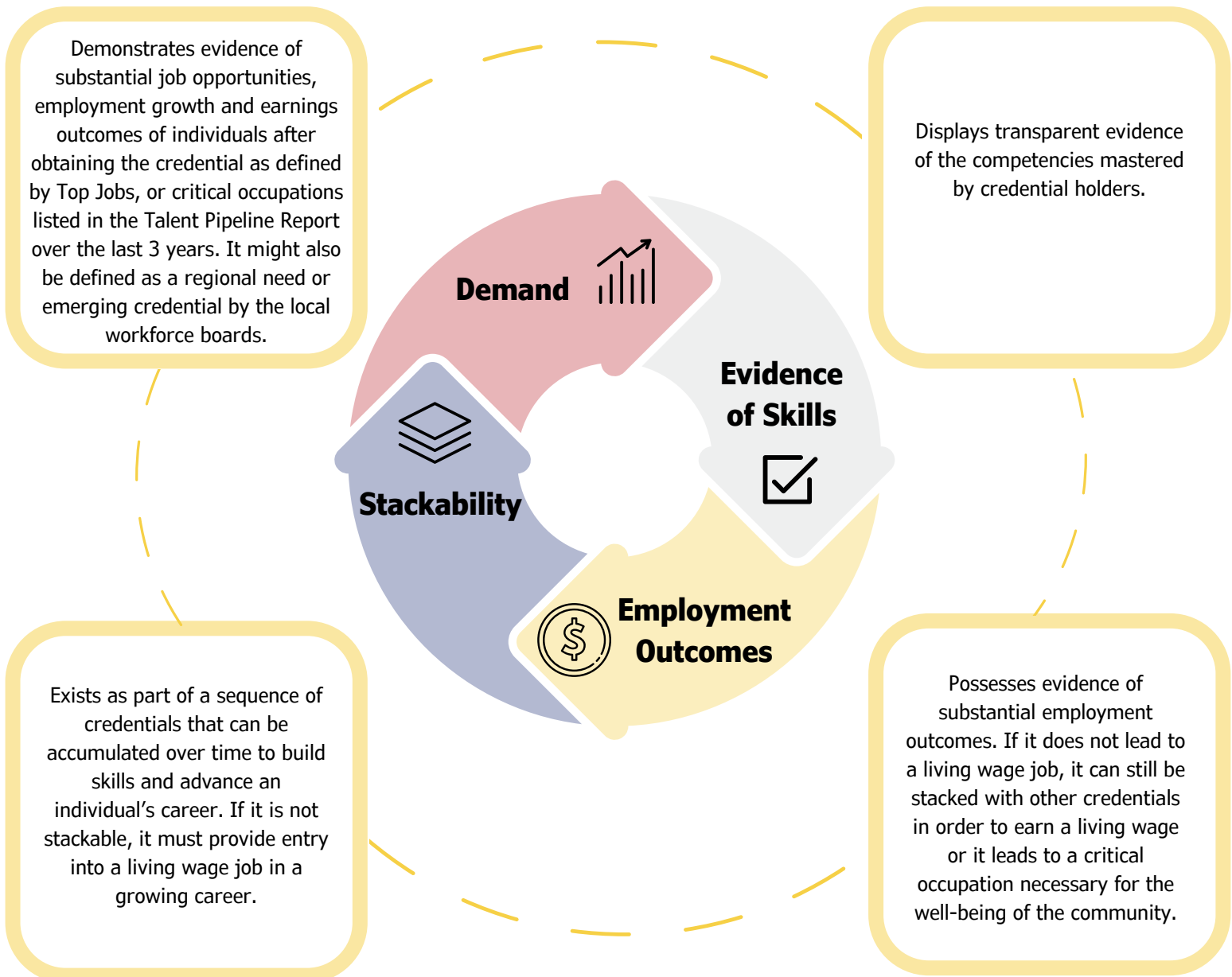


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Quality, In-Demand, Non-Degree Credentials

The Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), in partnership with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and Colorado Succeeds, defines a credential as “certifications, licenses, apprenticeship certificates, micro-credentials including badges, and sub-baccalaureate for-credit certificates.” They also state that “demand, evidence of skills learned, employment outcomes, and stackability are important components of non-degree credential pathways to the workforce.”

To be considered a quality, in-demand, non-degree credential, the credential must meet:



To be considered a quality, in-demand, non-degree credential, a credential must meet one of the following

options:

Option 1

must meet all 4 of the below criteria



Demand

- Connects to a Top Job or critical occupation listed in the Talent Pipeline Report over the last three years.
- Defined as a regional need or emerging credential by the local Workforce Development Board or Approving Agency.
- Accredited or recognized by a statewide or national industry-recognized accredited body.



Evidence of Skills

- Provides clearly identified information on what skills and competencies are demonstrated by earning the credential.



Employment Outcomes

- Directly leads to a job paying a living wage (as defined by the MIT living wage calculator for each county).
- Develops the essential skills and competencies needed for jobs that pay a living wage.
- Can be stacked with other credentials to earn a living wage in an in-demand occupation or career pathway.



Stackability

- Exists as part of a stackable sequence of aligned credentials allowing for skill development, career progression, and increased earnings over time.
- Is a prerequisite to a credential required by industry to obtain a job.
- Leads to living wage in a growing occupation on its own.

Option 2

A credential may also be considered quality, in-demand, and non-degree if one of the following is true:

- The credential is required by law (i.e. Department of Regulatory Agencies or other regulatory/certifying agency) or is a prerequisite to a credential required by law.
- The credential is part of (or a prerequisite to) a Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- The credential leads to a critical occupation identified by the CWDC's Career Pathways Team, as evidenced by being directly related to an occupation or pathway in Careers in Colorado in My Colorado Journey.

Additional Resources



Visit Serve Colorado's Workforce Initiative Webpage to learn more about ongoing workforce initiatives: servecolorado.colorado.gov/workforce



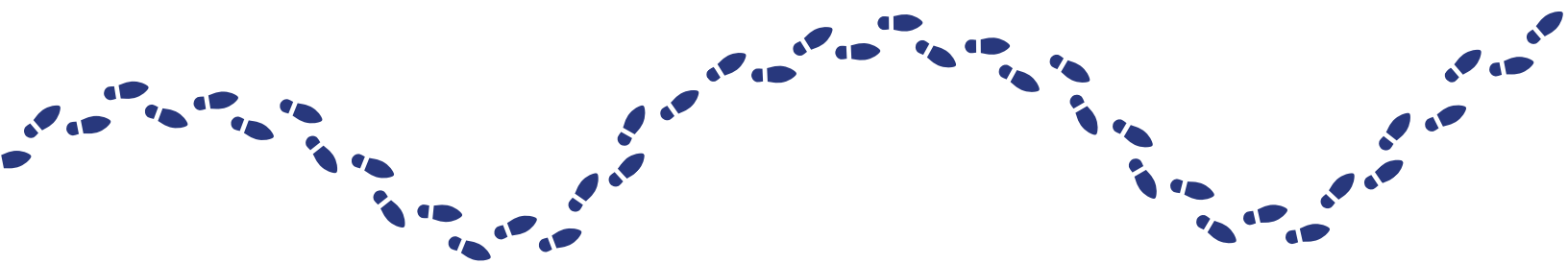
Read [Serve Colorado's Guide and Case Study for Combining AmeriCorps and Registered Apprenticeships](#).



Examine local area workforce development boards throughout the state of Colorado: cwdc.colorado.gov/get-involved/workforce-development-boards



Utilize [Jobs for the Future's Quality Jobs Framework](#).



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