# Landscape Scan of National Influences on Nondegree Credential Quality

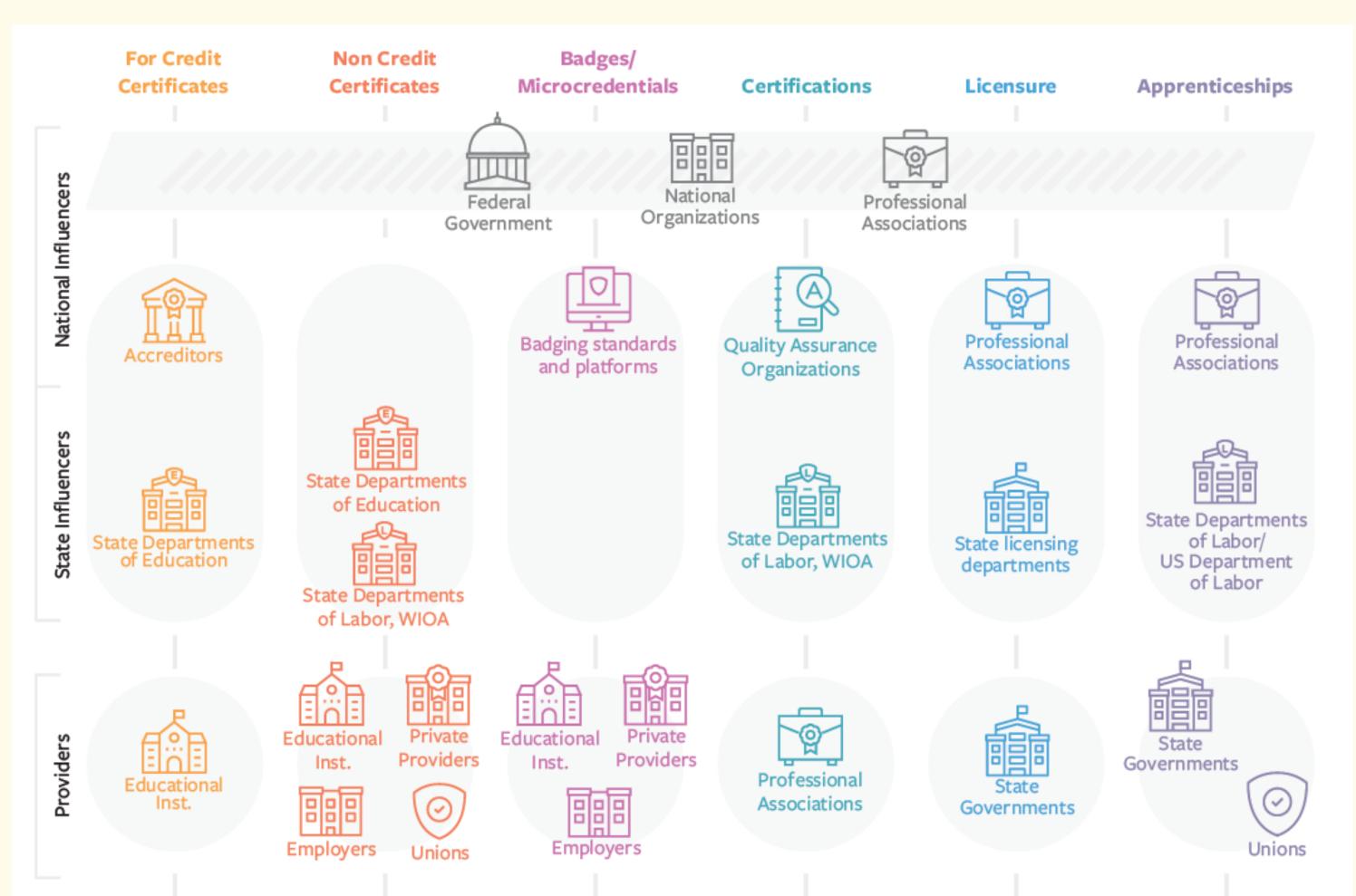
## Introduction

increasing Despite demand for nondegree credentials (NDCs) among students and employers, there remains no widely accepted system for measuring NDC quality. Many organizations have developed their own unique approaches to ensuring quality across the various forms of NDCs. Yet inconsistent use of these diverse strategies risks introducing a new layer of confusion into the already crowded and confusing credential market. It is essential to document the organizations involved in promoting quality so stakeholders can build a unified approach to promoting NDC quality in which diverse perspectives complement one another.

### **Research Protocol**

Rutgers' Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) conducted a landscape scan to document organizations seeking to build and validate quality outcomes among non-degree credit providers. EERC also identified their partners and interviewed organizational leaders to better understand their strategies and the challenges they face.

## The Emerging NDC Quality Ecosystem by Non-degree Credential Type



Our examination focused on organizations that work at the national level, including those quality-assurance promoting transparency, bodies, professional associations, accreditors, state government actors, and others.

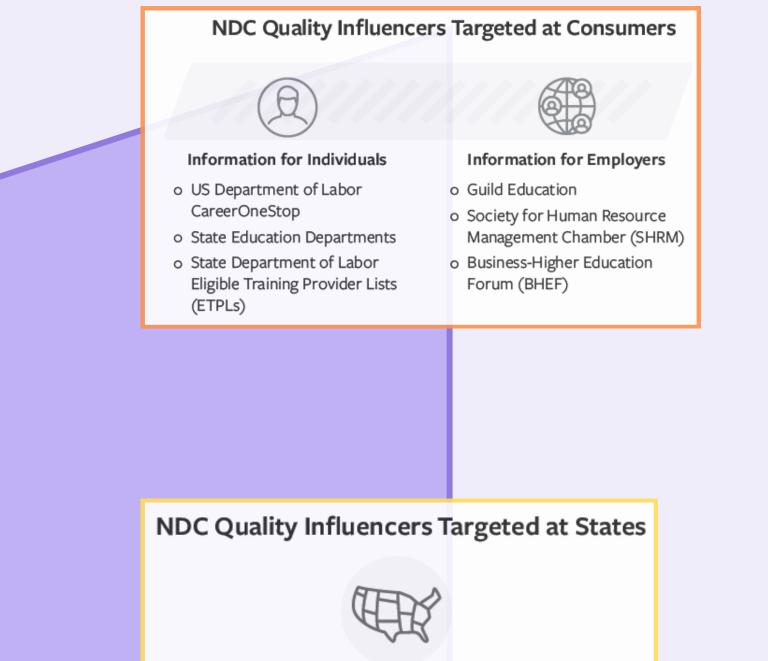
## Consumers Employers Individuals

## **Profile of the Influenced: Consumers, Providers, and States**

**Providers**. This is the largest and most diverse segment of stakeholders influenced by national organizations focused on NDC quality. For purposes of analyzing the postsecondary sector, the study identifies quality influencers for the following subsectors: educational institutions, private providers, professional associations, state government agencies, and badges.

Program-Based Short-Term Occupational Credentials Certificates, Badges		Industry-Based Occupational Credentials Certificates, Licenses, Apprenticeship
Educational Institutions	Private Providers	Professional Associations
Reforming practice: Education Strategy Group (ESG), League for Innovation, Education Design Lab (EDL), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), New America, Business Higher Education Forum (BHEF)	Middle States, CIRR Online Providers Quality Matters, Digital Promise	Workcred, ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB), Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.), National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), American Society for Testing and Materials (ATM), International Organization for Standardization and the International
Competency-based education/CPL: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, American Council on Education (ACE), Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN), Quality Assurance Commons		Electrotechnical CommissionISO/IEC
<i>Standards</i> : New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), Middle States		National Council on State Legislators (NCSL), Council on State Governments, Council on Licensing Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR)

**Consumers.** The two main groups of consumers are individuals and employers. Quality influencers typically support consumers by providing information about NDCs through disclosure based transparency efforts aimed at informing consumers' choices.





#### Badging (across providers)

Credly, Canvas Credentials (formerly Badgr), IMS Global, Open Badges, Digital Promise, other platforms

Note: This list of categorized organizations is rapidly changing and provides an approximation of organizations at a moment in time.

Standards: National Skills Coalition (NSC), New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE), Quality Assurance Commons (QAC), Digital Promise (DP), Education Strategy Group (ESG)

Reforming Practice: Advance CTE, C-BEN, NGA, SHEEO

States. State governments have the latent potential to provide structure to guide NDC quality efforts across a broad range of providers. Recognizing this, many national organizations have centered efforts on working with states to develop and refine NDC quality systems. These undertakings help states develop transparency efforts, norm-setting processes, and policies concerning NDCs.

## Recommendations

- *Philanthropic organizations* should support convenings and networks, including convening key representatives by function, promoting crossgroup engagement opportunities, and emboldening stakeholders to collaborate form foundational definitions in language and categories of credentials.
- *Researchers* should focus on understanding how information is used by NDC consumers and how providers can communicate their key data points.
- National organizations should share examples of NDC use that demonstrate how NDCs are used among employers; and support technical assistance to states and providers.
- **States** should support and study funding models and quality frameworks; and consider ways to extend current NDC quality efforts to include more providers, including those not currently included in public governance.
- Accreditors and states should support and reinforce standards of transparency to consumers, and promote employer engagement by convening employers and educational institutions through existing advisory boards.
- Funders and policymakers should engage with existing efforts to build data systems and connect them with quality discussions; and support cross-cutting values in the establishment of quality standards that promote equity.