

Landscape Scan of National Influences on Nondegree Credential Quality

Introduction

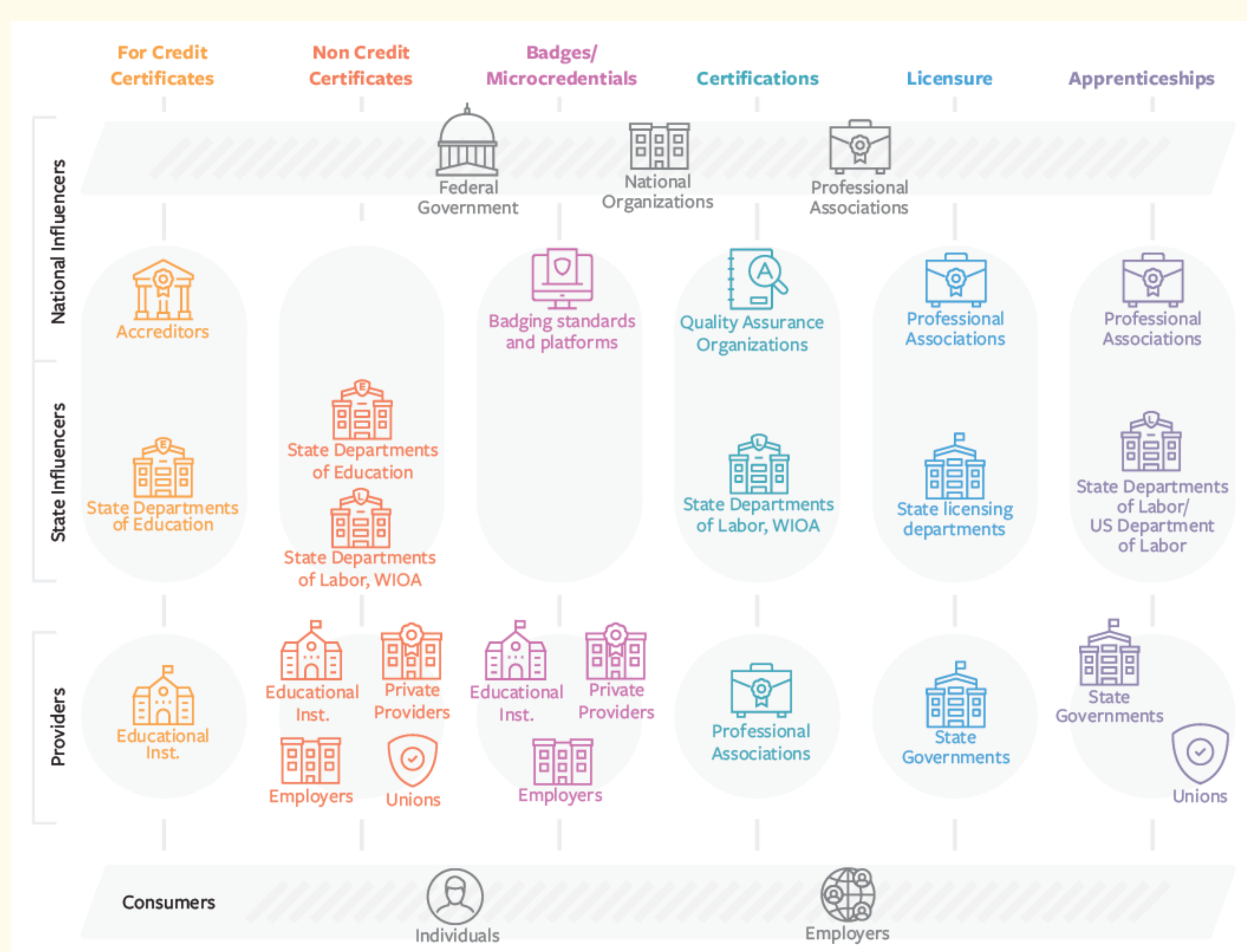
Despite increasing demand for nondegree credentials (NDCs) among students and employers, there remains no widely accepted system for measuring NDC quality. Many organizations have developed their own unique approaches to ensuring quality across the various forms of NDCs. Yet inconsistent use of these 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.

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

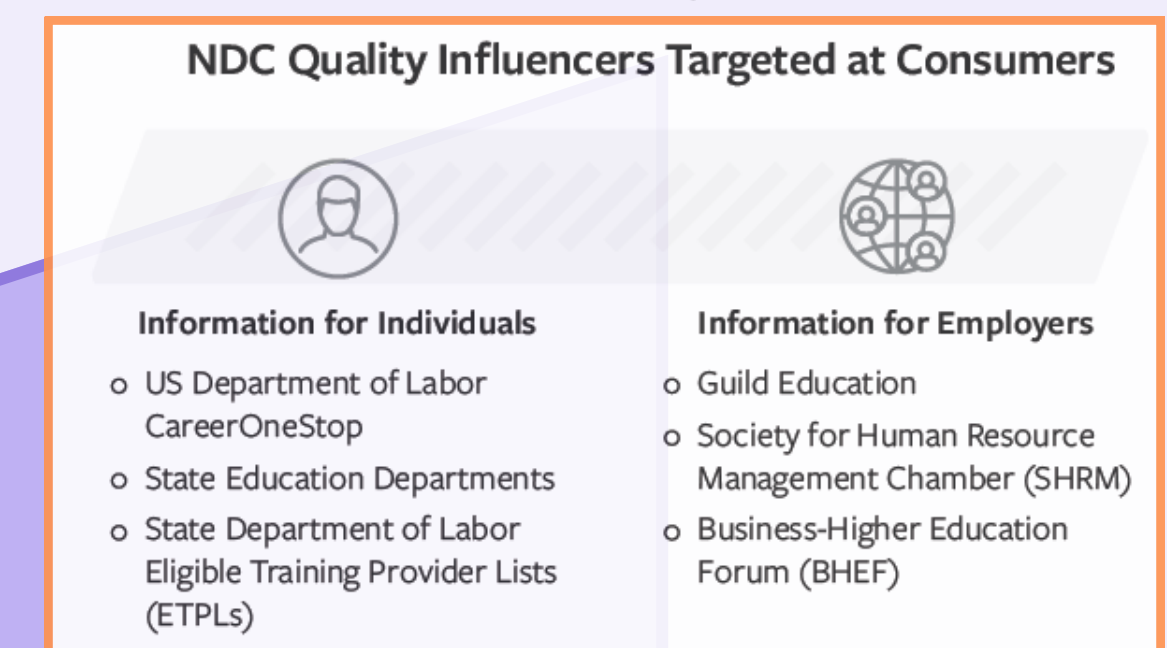
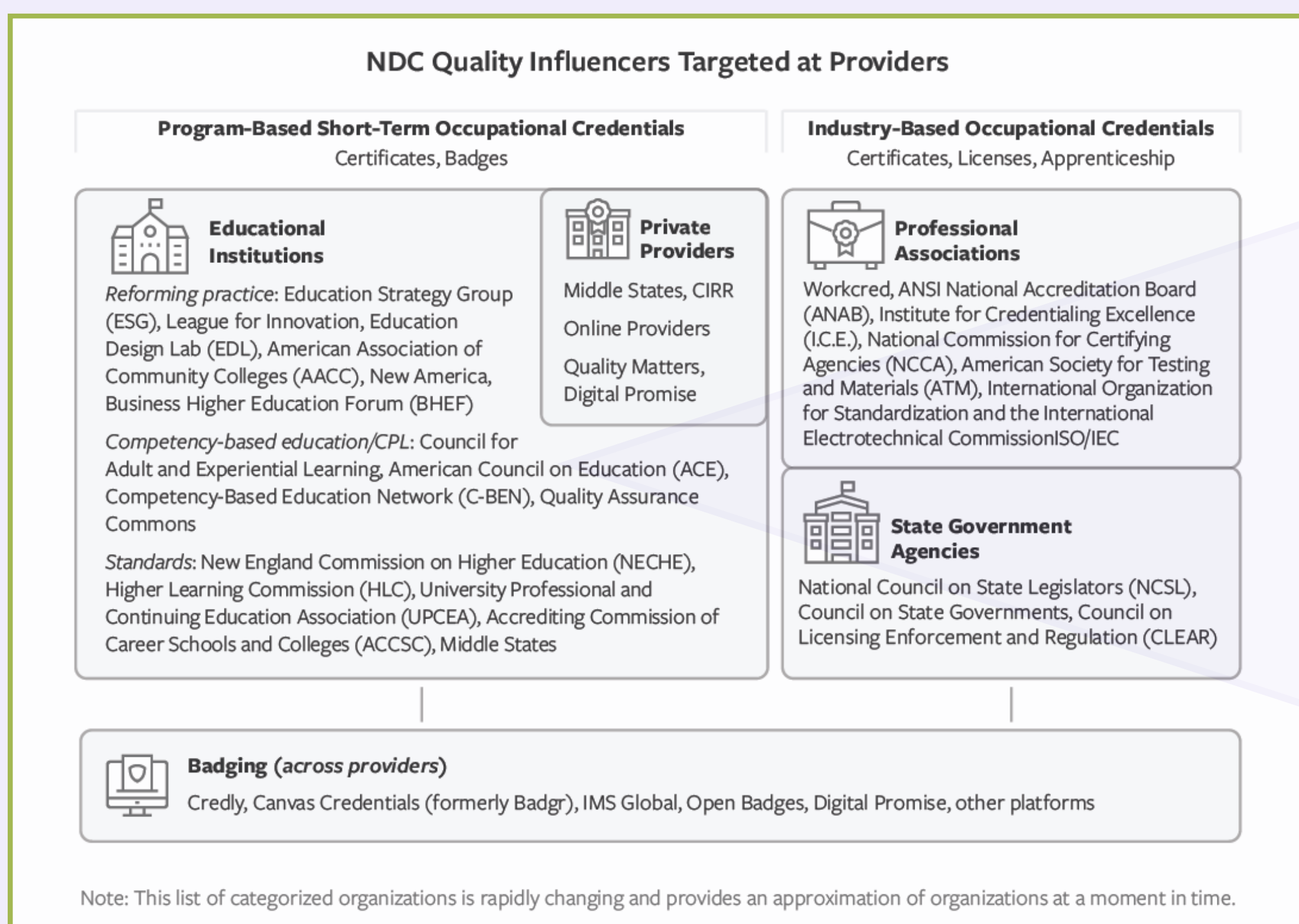
The Emerging NDC Quality Ecosystem by Non-degree Credential Type



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.

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.



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 cross-group 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.