



Connecting Learning to Careers through Credentials of Value

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Activity 1 - Mentimeter Survey (Yes, No, I don't know)

- I. Has your state identified in-demand career pathways and high-priority occupations?
- II. Is there a state agency or special council in your state designated to collaborate with employers and educators to establish common definitions for career pathways and credentials of value?
- III. Do you have a common data source for analyzing labor market demand and mapping secondary and postsecondary training opportunities and credentials?
- IV. Does your state have a unified credential list spanning education and systems and providing a central approach to credential approval?
- V. Is there a public-facing list that clearly communicates approved and promoted credentials to stakeholders?

Commission on Career Pathways & Credentials

Members from each of SREB's 16 states, including leadership from governors' offices and state agencies, K-12 superintendents, principals and teachers, postsecondary deans and faculty members, and business leaders collaborated on the development of:

1. A regional framework for identifying in-demand career pathways and priority occupations
2. Recommendations for implementing and sustaining in-demand career pathways
3. Criteria for identifying and promoting credentials valued by regional and state industries

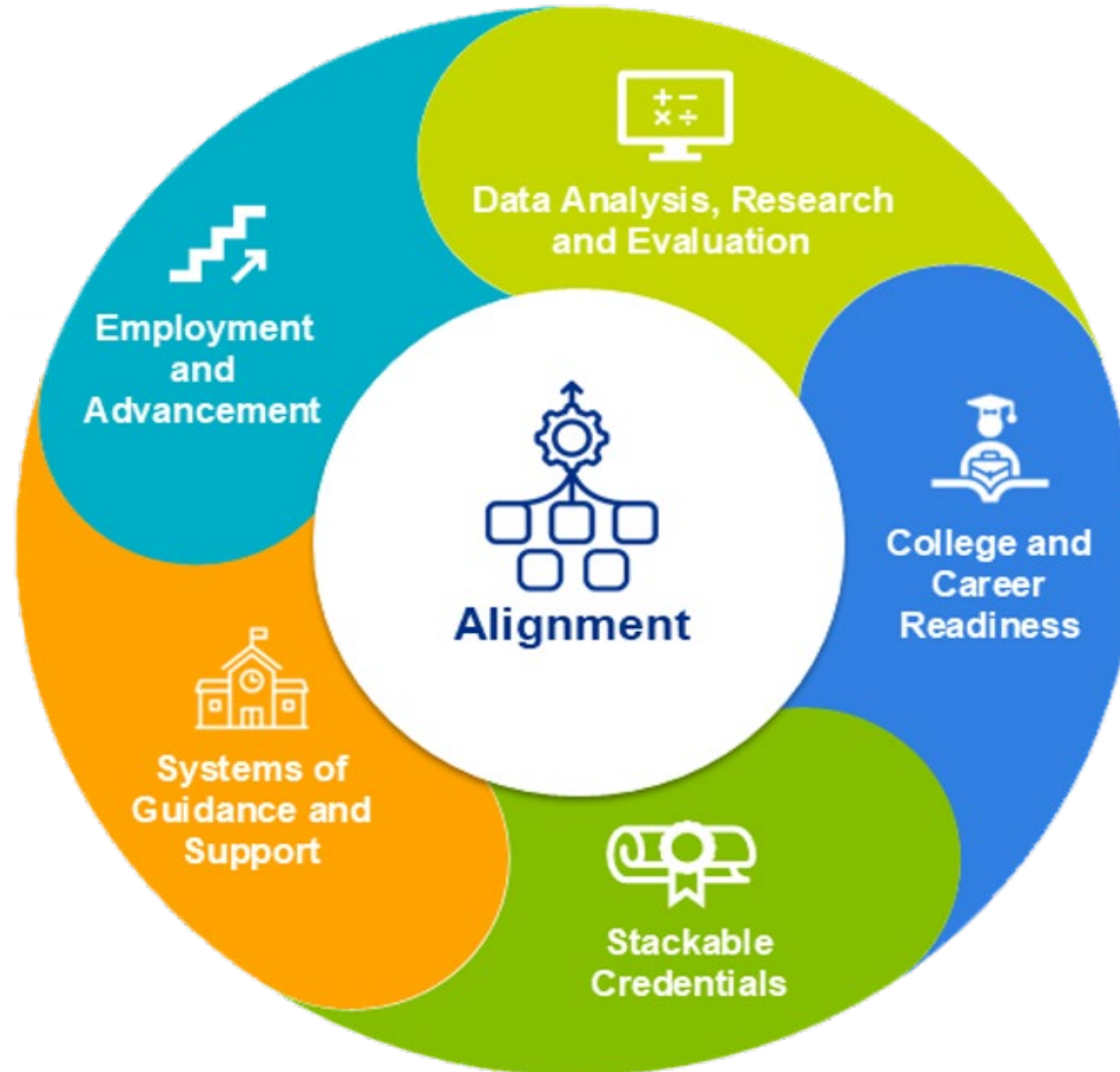
Career Pathways and Credential of Value

Definitions

SREB defines Career Pathways as connected sequences of education and training that support and prepare students to gain the knowledge and skills needed to attain postsecondary credentials and employment.

Credentials of value validate an individual's skills and competencies in a particular industry through a certification, license or other credential. They are obtained through an assessment process, are often stackable or portable, and lead to positive employment and wage outcomes.

Key Elements of Career Pathways



Commission on Career Pathways Briefs

I. In-demand Career Pathways and High-Priority Occupations

- I. Make the Case for Identifying and Using In-demand Pathways and Occupations Lists
- II. Recommendations (Five recommendations with strategies and calls to action)
- III. Spotlights on SREB States

II. Pathways by Design: A Guide to Connect Learning to Careers

- I. Design Phase
- II. Implementation Phase
- III. Continuous Improvement Phase

III. Credentials of Value

- I. Processes
- II. Approval and Tiering Criteria
- III. Measuring Value

State Implementation – South Carolina

From Recommendations to Action:
South Carolina Aligns Workforce
and Credential Systems.



Coordinating Council for Workforce Development

Authority

- Established by Legislation
- Expanded role in 2023 to better align the education and workforce system (Act 67)

Representation

- K-12
- Postsecondary
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Business and Industry

Purpose

- Annually review and revise the Unified State Plan
- Develop and monitor metrics
- Build a statewide education and workforce portal
- Improve coordination of education and workforce efforts

Priority Occupations

- Cross-agency collaboration and governance
- Identify, monitor, and update priority occupations
- Effective use of priority occupations list across state systems

In-Demand Career Pathways and High-Priority Occupations

The Southern Regional Education Board's Commission on Career Pathways and Credentials, chaired by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, has brought together experts from each of SREB's 16 states, including leadership from governors' offices and state agencies, K-12 superintendents, principals and teachers, postsecondary deans and faculty members, and business leaders. The commission members are investigating and sharing promising practices from across the region and using their collective expertise to identify common solutions to shared challenges.

The commission, which began its work in January 2025, is developing recommendations for:

- Using labor market data to guide decision making.
- Designating a state agency or special council to collaborate with employers, secondary and postsecondary education agencies, and workforce investment boards to establish common definitions for high-demand, high-skilled and high-wage careers.
- Creating criteria for identifying high demand career pathways and approving industry-certification examinations and technical skill assessments that are part of a system of stackable credentials.

This policy brief is the first of several publications to be produced by the commission.

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Priority Occupations by Career Cluster

Career Cluster	High School Diploma or Less	Higher Education Credential
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	2	0
Architecture & Construction	20	4
Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications	3	1
Business Management & Administration	7	5
Education & Training	1	5
Finance	3	6
Government & Public Administration	2	1
Health Science	6	18
Hospitality & Tourism	11	0
Human Services	4	4
Information Technology	0	7
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	9	3
Manufacturing	15	0
Marketing	9	2
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	0	3
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	11	3

FIGURE 1

The number of Priority Occupations by career cluster and education typically required to enter the occupation.

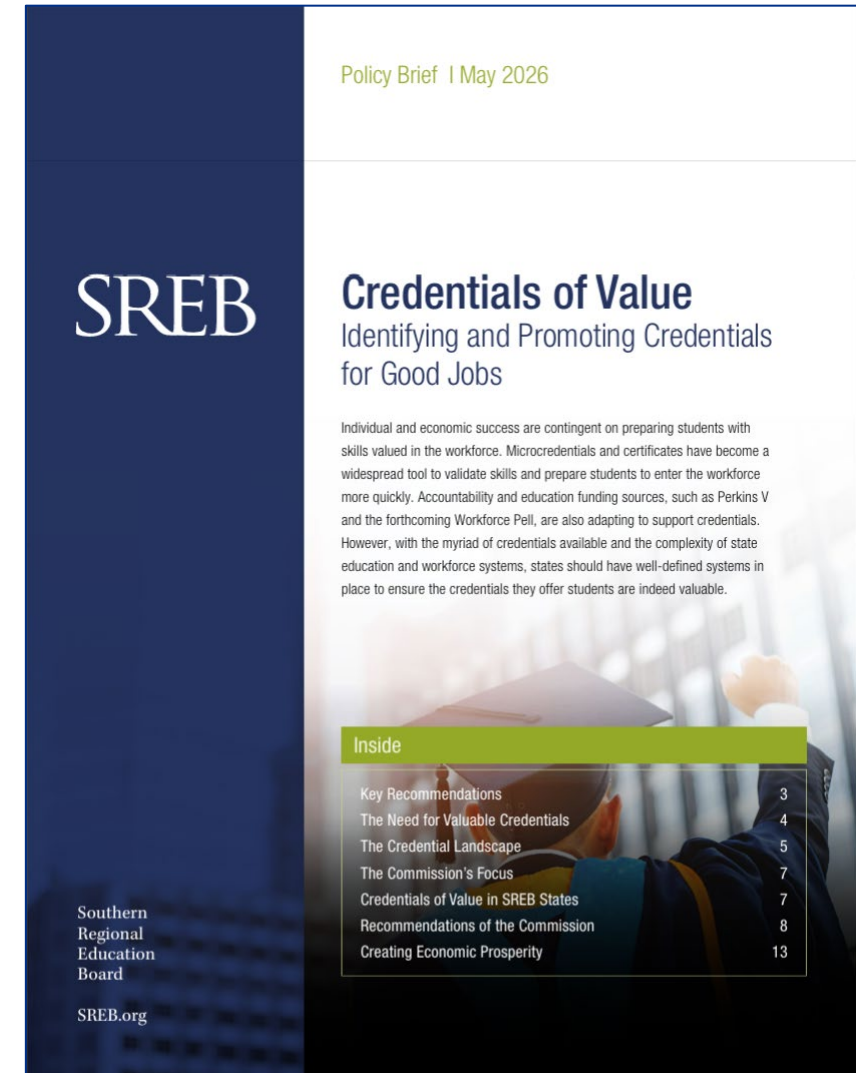
Priority Occupation List Value

Secondary and postsecondary programs can utilize the list to determine career pathway programs to expand or add (or scale back).

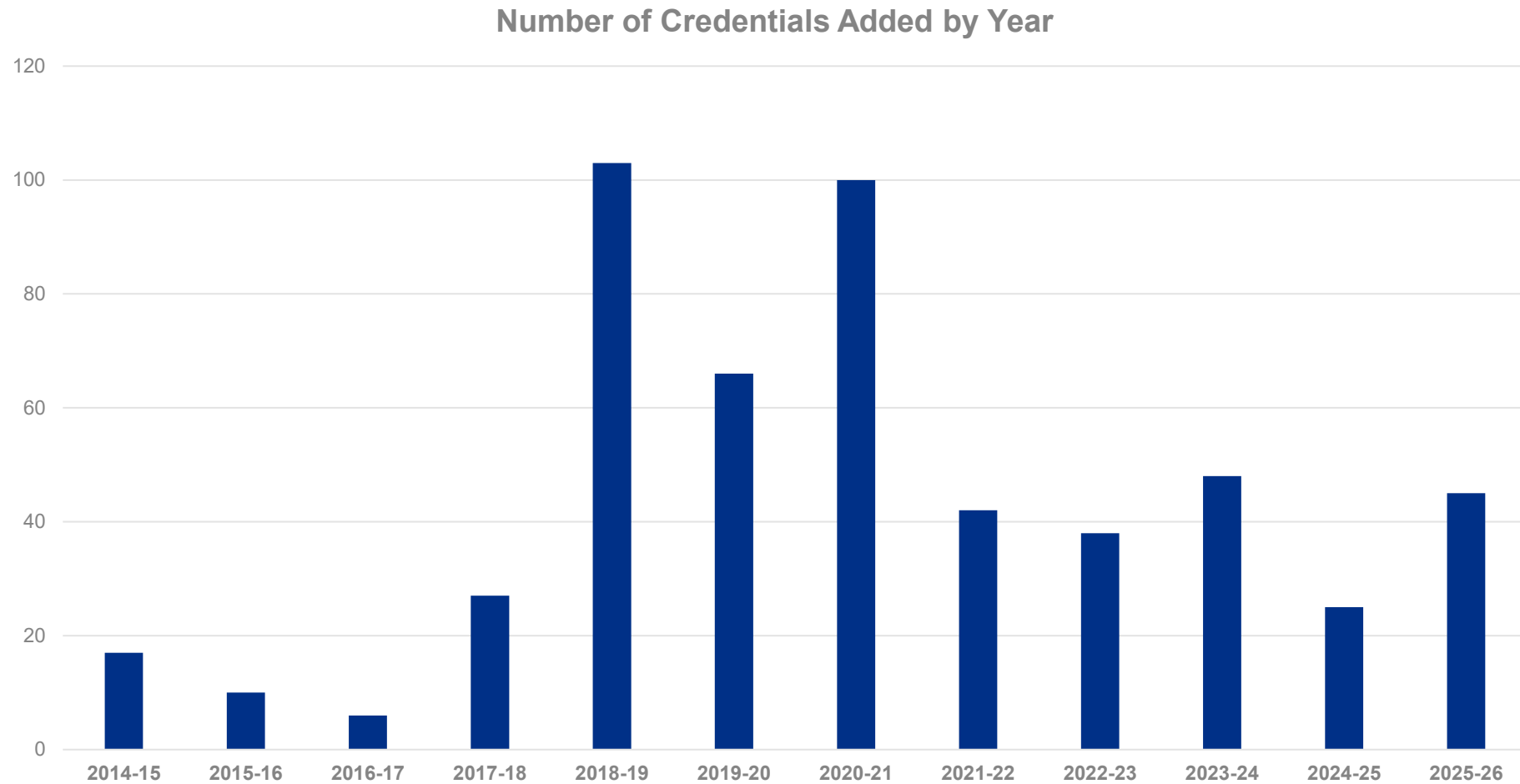
Industry credentials can be approved or prioritized based on relation and importance in priority occupations.

Credentials of Value

- Statewide committee or governing board
- Tiered system
- Application process
- Public-facing credential list
- Semi-annual revalidation process



The Number of Available Credentials Surged



Tier Descriptors

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Introductory	Intermediate	Career Ready
• Foundational Skills: Validates basic competencies for further education or training. • Regionally Recognized: Accepted by local industries but not a statewide hiring requirement. • Early Career Pathway: Earned in the first stages of a CTE program, leading to higher-level credentials.	• Industry-Aligned: Valued by employers but not always required for hiring. • Supports Career Pathways: Provides an employment advantage and job readiness. • Enhances Workforce Participation: Increases employability, but additional training may be needed for advancement.	• High-Demand Careers: Required for employment in priority, high-wage occupations. • Clear Economic Benefits: Leads to significant wage gains, promotions, or job retention. • Career Advancement: Recognized entry point into further education, training, and certifications.

Application



The image shows the cover of a form titled "SC Industry Aligned Certification Application". At the top, it features the South Carolina Department of Education logo and the text "OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS" in large, bold, orange letters. Below this, the title "SC Industry Aligned Certification Application" is written in a dark font, followed by the subtitle "Submission Form for State Review and Recognition". The form includes three paragraphs of text: the first explains the purpose of the form, the second describes the review process, and the third asks for detailed information. It also provides a contact email for the Office of Career Readiness.

**SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

SC Industry Aligned Certification Application

Submission Form for State Review and Recognition

This form outlines the minimum requirements for a new industry-aligned certification to be considered for state-level recognition in South Carolina.

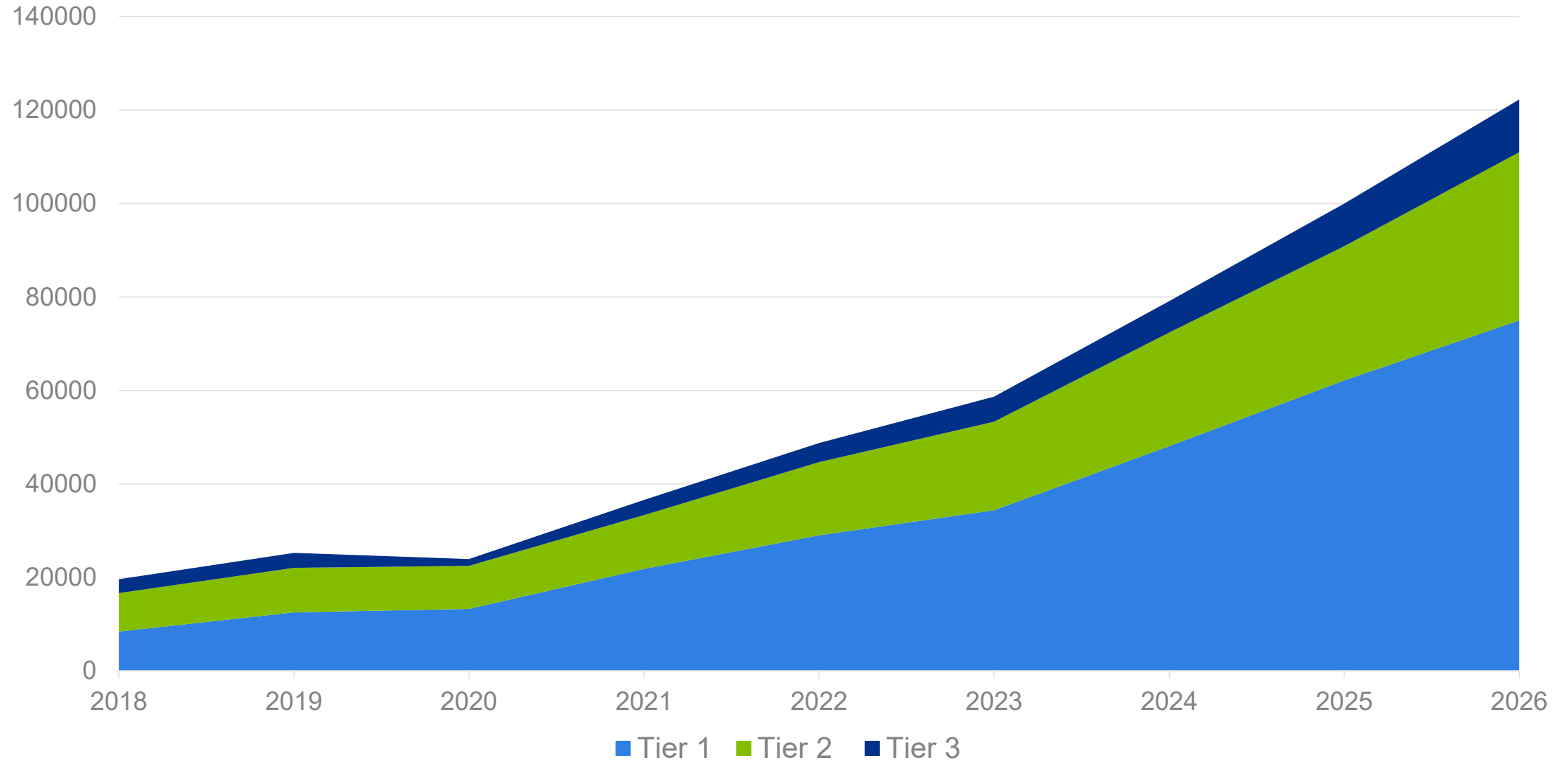
Once an application meets the initial criteria (included within this form, it will be forwarded to the Department of Employment and Workforce for review to confirm alignment with industry needs and relevance to employability. Final determinations, including approval by the Education Oversight Committee, are typically issued each spring.

Please provide as much detail as possible to support the submission.

For questions or assistance, contact the Office of Career Readiness at CareerReadiness@ed.sc.gov.

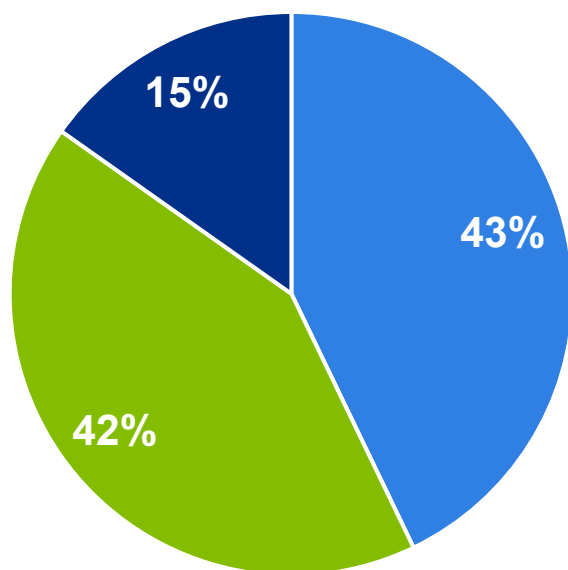
- New application system requested documentation of credential rigor and local business support
- Associated pathways and courses identified prior to submission
- Reduced the volume of applications received – 19 certifications submitted for review this year.

Number of Certifications Attempted by Tier



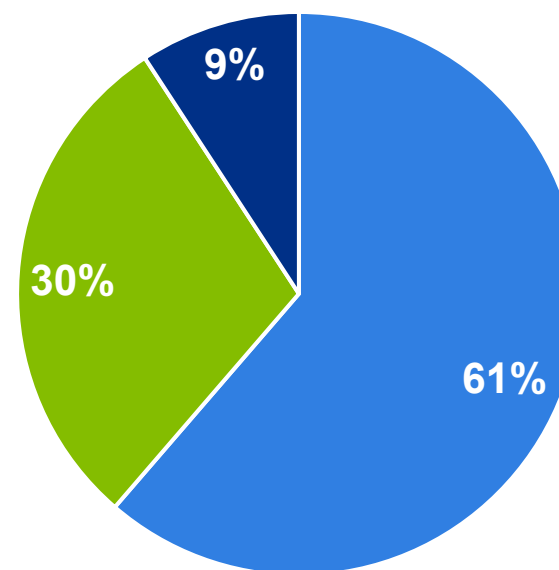
Are Students Attempting Valuable Certifications?

Proportion of Attempts by Tier 2018



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

Proportion of Attempts by Tier 2026



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

From Outputs to Outcomes

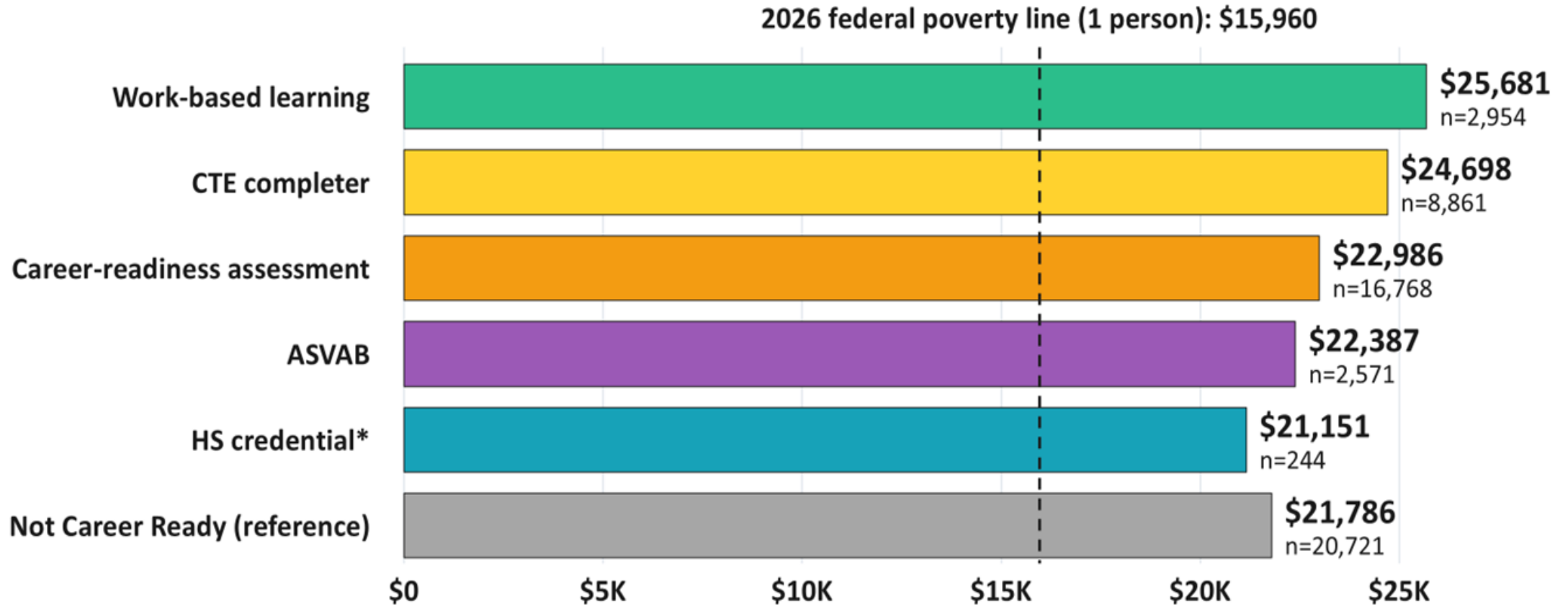


Measuring Value

- Across the graduation cohorts analyzed (**2020-2024**), how many students earn each **CCR** designation?
- How do **College Ready** designations relate to...
 - ... *enrollment* in college within one year?
 - ... *continuance* in college for a second year?
- How do **Career Ready** designations relate to...
 - ... *annualized earnings* for the year after high school?

Earnings by Career Ready Pathway

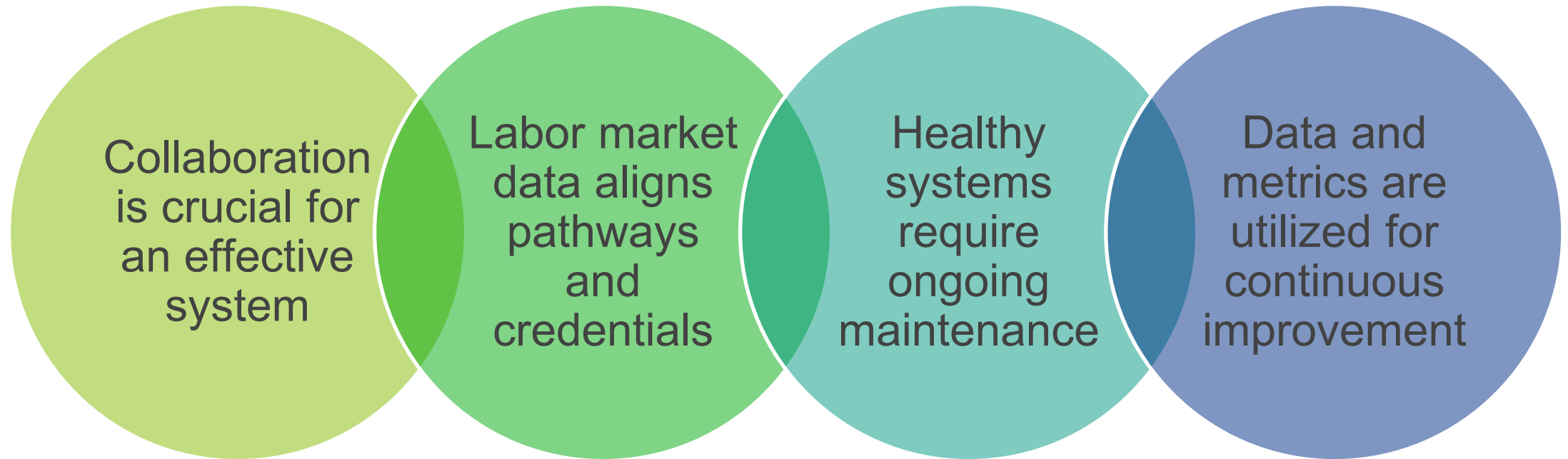
Median annualized wage, FTE workers, regardless of graduation status. Pathways overlap; a student can appear under several.



Grey reference bar = all students without the designation. Work-based learning and CTE completion lead every route.

- HS credential is the SC Employability Credential, earned by students with disabilities, who are all non-graduates, so it is not a like-for-like comparison with the mostly-graduate reference bar. HS credential tracked from 2022 only. Poverty line: HHS 2026 guideline, one person (aspe.hhs.gov). Source: SDE, EOC/NSC Clearinghouse, DEW matched data.

Key Themes



Activity 2 – Self Assessment

Using the provided rubric, answer the question:

Where is your state in implementing the key recommendations?

Activity 3 – Report from States

- Which recommendation(s) do you think you should focus on to maximize impact in your pathway system?
- What information, resources, or partners do you need to improve your progress in that recommendation area(s)?
- How will you measure your progress?

 **40th**
Anniversary

Making Schools Work CONFERENCE

Louisville, Kentucky | July 13-16, 2027

SREB

Southern Regional
Education Board



- Celebrate: 40 years of advancing school improvement
- Find: Dynamic sessions and meaningful networking opportunities
- Take Away: Proven practices and innovative strategies



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