

# Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

## CSW's Work About Competency-Based Credentialing

CSW aims to dramatically increase the attainment of market relevant credentials in order to connect more learners, especially in vulnerable populations, to family-sustaining careers. To this end, CSW aims to contribute to large scale, nationwide adoption of a shared competency-based credentialing agenda while simultaneously helping local, state or national partners test and apply effective competency-based credentialing approaches.

CSW's approach is to focus on strategies to *strengthen the alignment between educational attainment and labor markets in the U.S.* CSW's work in this area includes the following efforts.

1. Mobilize and continue to build momentum around a shared competency-based credentialing agenda among broad partnerships by:
  - a. Supporting and participating in a core group of stakeholders as leaders and champions of competency-based credentialing adoption.
  - b. Supporting scalable use of competency-based credentials by developing needed infrastructure, including the identification and clarification of effective approaches, critical principles and consistent definitions of both degree and non-degree credentials.
  - c. Developing key research and thought leadership materials to document the specific potential for returns on investment while broadly making the case for these efforts.
2. Build the capacity of key stakeholders to test and apply competency-based credentialing models and approaches "on the ground" to inform national efforts by:
  - a. Helping stakeholders to identify and understand competency-based models, including assessing their own capacity and readiness to apply these approaches.
  - b. Supporting local, regional or statewide implementation of competency-based models through strategy development, targeted research, fostering institutional and/or multi-stakeholder buy-in, and building networks of practitioners.
  - c. Identifying and working both broadly and with specific organizations to reduce institutional barriers to competency-based credentialing.

CSW brings to this work relationships, expertise, experience, and skills that combine to position us well to make a major contribution to achieving the envisioned large scale adoption of competency-based credentials:

- **Trusted Partner.** Across 20+ years of work, CSW has built credibility with many peers and with change agents at the national, state and local levels as a *trusted partner* committed to attaining shared goals. We know how to offer neutral spaces and platforms for diverse stakeholders to come together to address difficult issues, to develop promising practices and strategies, and to develop and act upon collective agendas.
- **Relationships.** CSW has excellent working relationships already with most of the national organizations engaged in advancing competency-based credentialing. CSW is engaged with

many of those partners in collaborative work currently, spanning industry associations, educational institutions, federal agencies, and foundations.

- **Expertise.** CSW Senior Fellow Keith W. Bird is an internationally recognized subject matter expert about competency-based credentialing. CSW has leveraged that expertise to focus on opportunities to research and develop the use of competency-based workforce credentials and, as a result, has developed strong internal knowledge about this field among several others within the organization. CSW also brings significant expertise about workforce development policy and strategy, developed during 20+ years of organizational efforts, including managing and supporting large-scale change initiatives at the national, state and local levels. CSW Chairman and Co-Founder Larry Good has led CSW's workforce change efforts and brings that to CSW's credentialing work in complement to Dr. Bird's expertise.
- **Experience.** Dr. Bird led innovative experiments in adopting competency-based workforce credentials while chancellor of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Since he joined CSW, our body of work has increasingly included a focus on competency-based workforce credentials. Currently, CSW is managing, in partnership with CLASP a Lumina Foundation supported initiative to develop a U.S. credentials framework that can integrate into a common picture the diverse mix of degrees, certifications, certificates, licenses, apprenticeships and more at use in the marketplace. In 2013, CSW published *Making a Market for Competency-Based Credentials*, a major study about the market gaps and needs that was supported by the Surdna Foundation.
- **Skills.** CSW staff offer strong skills across the dimensions of this work. We've successfully managed multiple networks of partners, in some cases spanning more than a decade in duration. We offer excellent facilitation and convening capacity, strong research and writing skills, and the ability to effectively manage communications as will be essential in this endeavor.

This work fits very closely with CSW's core competencies:

- **We are a thought leader and a doer.** We work at both the conceptual and applied levels in addressing important workforce issues; this work requires that blend.
- **We focus on markets.** Making markets function more effectively, as is key to the growth of use of competency-based workforce credentials, is central to our beliefs and work.
- **We believe transformative change about complex issues requires interdisciplinary solutions and sustained, long-term commitment.** CSW spends much of its life connecting dots across policy and constituency silos. This endeavor demands exactly that. We're also patient; we have the staying power to stick with this effort for the years it will take to realize ultimate success.