



Overview of Technical Assistance for Community and Technical Colleges

Background:

In recent years, the stackable credentials approach has emerged as a promising practice to help students progress along the education continuum and obtain a postsecondary credential with labor market value. By organizing traditional programs into a series of progressive, stackable certificates that build on each other, colleges have created a series of shorter pathways to associate degree completion. The certificates are intended to represent exit and entry points intentionally designed to maximize skill acquisition, employability, and seamless transitions to a career. Learners are able to exit a program for full-time employment and then resume their program where they left off when they return to college to pursue the next level of credential or degree attainment.

Project Focus:

Mapping Upward is a new project supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). It will provide technical assistance (TA) to up to five (5) college networks as they work to embed stackable, industry-recognized credentials within technical associate degree programs. Selected college networks will receive customized virtual and face-to-face TA from subject matter experts and a dedicated TA coach who will guide the network and individual colleges through needs assessment, goal setting, and action planning. The TA to be provided will advance efforts in stackable credential design including such components as employer engagement, industry certification alignment, faculty collaboration, awarding of credit, and credit transfer agreements.

College Networks:

To apply for participation in *Mapping Upward*, interested colleges must form or join a network that meets the following requirements:

- **Size:** The network must be comprised of two to four (2-4) community and/or technical colleges; one college must be designated as the lead institution.
- **Sector:** The network must identify a single industry sector on which to focus (e.g., information technology, advanced manufacturing, or other). The network colleges can work together to embed stackable credentials within a single associate degree program or each college can work individually to embed stackable credentials within their own associate degree programs in the identified industry sector.

- **Proximity:** Network colleges must be located within reasonable distance of each other but do not have to be in the same state. A reasonable distance is necessary to allow for face-to-face meetings and site visits from TA coaches.

The following are examples of potential networks. Note: These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive.

- Colleges form a network to create a new associate degree program with embedded stackable credentials for a key industry sector in the state.
- Colleges form a network to scale a successful single-institution model of stackable credentials across the network.
- Colleges form a network to replicate a successful program or process of embedding stackable credentials from one industry sector to another.
- Colleges form a network to collaborate with industry and education partners to convert noncredit certificate programs to credit-bearing stackable credentials leading to an associate degree.
- Colleges from neighboring states form a network to work with regional employers to redesign or create an associate degree program with embedded, industry-valued stackable credentials.

Requirements for Participating Network Colleges:

- Agree to underwrite all travel and related expenses associated with project activities of participating colleges.
- Identify a college point of contact to assist with communication among the network colleges and TA coach. (The project will provide conference call services, webinar software, and other tools to facilitate project communication.)
- Designate a team of college representatives such as faculty, department chairs, and deans from the targeted program area that will participate consistently in the TA throughout the course of the project, July 2016-August 2017.
- Participate in the *Mapping Upward* Institute on July 21-22, 2016, at Gateway Technical College in Racine, Wisconsin. Each network college should send 2-3 team members.
- Participate in at least one site visit by the TA coach; to be hosted on the campus of one of the colleges.
- Develop a project plan and identify deliverables to work on throughout the project. Participating networks may propose individual college deliverables, group deliverables, or both.
- Document lessons learned in the course of participation in *Mapping Upward*.

Requests for TA Process:

Interested colleges must submit an application form that will be available for download the week of April 18 at <http://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/community-college-stackable-credentials>. Completed forms will be **due May 18, 2016**. College networks selected for participation will be notified by **June 1**.

Selection Criteria:

The following criteria will be used to evaluate network applications:

- Examples of existing work in the area of stackable credential design or the completion of planning activities to begin such work;
- Evidence of ongoing employer engagement and/or the completion of planning activities and initial partnership development that technical assistance efforts can build upon;
- Description of proposed approach to stackable credential design;
- Willingness to develop partnerships among educational institutions, employers, workforce development agencies, and community organizations to facilitate program design, student support services, and work-based learning opportunities; and
- Letter of support from the presidents of the network colleges indicating their commitment to providing the human and fiscal resources necessary to meet the requirements for participating network colleges and to carry out the proposed work. The involvement of two to five (2-5) faculty/staff members per college team is strongly encouraged.

To Learn More about *Mapping Upward* or for questions about the network application, contact:

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