

High School Industry-Recognized Credentials Initiative

[Each Child, Our Future](#), Ohio's strategic plan for education, emphasizes that in high school, each child should see the relevance of his or her learning, be exposed to practical, real-world work settings and begin defining his or her future. The plan calls for Ohio high schools to inspire students to identify their paths to future success through career-focused learning.

To support this career-focused approach, Ohio House Bill 166 enacted a series of industry recognized credential initiatives. Below are new programs and policies related to industry-recognized credentials that appear on the Ohio Department of Education's list and explanations of how these affect existing programs and policies. For clarity, "school district" refers to a city, local or exempted village school district; community school; STEM school; or joint vocational school district.

NEW Initiatives

1. **Notifying Students of Industry Credential Opportunities:** Ohio now requires each school district to notify students who are enrolled in relevant, career-technical education courses about industry-recognized credential opportunities. Districts can do this in many ways. The Department recommends that each career-technical education teacher review with his or her students the [career-field credentials found here](#). The Department recommends that districts share opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials with all students, including those who are not enrolled in career-technical courses.
2. **Industry Credential Payment and Reimbursement (\$8 million):** Each school district must now pay for the cost of any student's industry-recognized credential that appears on the Department's list. The district which paid for the cost of the student's credential can then seek reimbursement from the Ohio Department of Education. House Bill 166 appropriated \$8 million each fiscal year of the current budget for the Department to reimburse school districts for the cost of industry-recognized credentials that appear on the Department's list or journeyman certifications students earn. The Department will work with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Office of Workforce Transformation to determine the amount of reimbursement for each industry-recognized credential from the Department's list, based on the time it takes to earn the credential and its cost. The Department expects to notify districts of the amount of reimbursement by December 2019.
3. **Innovative Workforce Incentive Program (\$12.5 million):** Ohio offers many viable career options. To advance the workforce priorities in our state, Ohio law has created the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program. The program promotes high school students earning industry-recognized credentials in priority industry sectors. The Innovative Workforce Incentive Program will identify credentials eligible for an additional \$1,250 to be paid to the educating entities. These incentive dollars will be paid to a school district who reports a student as earning a credential from the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program list. If a student attends more than one school district, the incentive dollars will be paid to the school district that paid for the cost of the eligible credential. The law has appropriated \$12.5 million each fiscal year for this incentive. Additional resources on the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program, including reporting procedures, is under development and will be made available to districts once finalized.

4. ***Innovative Workforce Incentive Program Implementation Grants (\$4.5 million)***: The law allocated \$4.5 million each fiscal year to support implementation of the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program to help districts, community schools, and STEM schools establish qualifying credentialing programs. This grant opportunity prioritizes senior-only credential programs in schools that do not have such programs. Additional resources on the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program, including application procedures, is under development and will be made available to districts once finalized.

Impact on Current Initiatives

1. ***High School Graduation Requirements***: Students in the class of 2023 and beyond are eligible to receive industry-recognized credential seals on their diplomas, but students in the classes of 2020, 2021 and 2022 also can earn industry-recognized credentials on their pathways to graduation. Find more information on high school [graduation requirements here](#). Innovative Workforce Incentive Program credentials are also included in these options.
2. ***Senior Only Credential Programs***: Districts may continue to offer senior-only credential programs for any industry-recognized credential. Find more information on [senior only programs here](#).
3. ***Programs and courses that do not correlate to industry-recognized credentials*** – Many industries and career-fields do not call for industry-recognized credentials in their hiring practices. Career-tech programs and courses that do not have an associated industry-recognized credential to offer as part of eligibility for graduation or the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program are still valuable for many reasons. The Department encourages school districts to think carefully about their program offerings and recruitment efforts to make sure their high schools inspire students to identify paths to success based on their individual interests and aptitudes.

The Ohio Department of Education is working closely with its partners to develop more information on these initiatives. [Subscribe to the Department's EdConnection](#) e-newsletter for updates as this information is released. For answers to questions about high school industry-recognized credentials, email the Department at industrycredentials@education.ohio.gov.