Embedding Credit for Prior Learning
in Career Pathways

INTRODUCTION

Evidence increasingly shows that awarding credit for prior learning (CPL) can boost learners' completion rates in a way that saves them time and money.

A 72-institution study by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) found that adults who earned CPL were 17 percent more likely to complete a credential.[1] Notably the impact was even greater for Hispanic learners, who experienced a 29 percent increase in credential completion, and Pell Grant recipients, who were 19 percent more likely to complete a credential if they had earned CPL.[2]

Among the most common methods institutions use to assess CPL are standardized exams, such as Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST).[3] Many states require that institutions award credit to learners who earn certain minimum AP scores (26 states) or to individuals with military experience (35 states). Many states also have state- or system-wide CPL policies that cover varying topics — from fees and costs to credit limitations to the transfer of CPL and more.[4]

CAEL and WICHE's survey also demonstrated that CPL is under-utilized by states, systems and institutions.

Only 11 percent of learners in the analysis had earned CPL.[5] To build more inclusive on-ramps to high-quality postsecondary education, CPL processes should be expanded to reflect learners' postsecondary-level learning gained through their life, educational and occupational experiences. These experiences include work-based learning and industry-recognized credentials earned in high school, validated on-the-job training and non-credit and non-degree coursework.

As state leaders work toward attainment goals, address crucial workforce shortages, and seek to build inclusive economies that offer family-sustaining wages, CPL policy and practice should be investigated as a high-reward strategy. Effective and equitable CPL policy and practice enable learners to apply their postsecondary-level learning toward career pathways that lead to credentials of value in an accelerated and affordable manner. Moreover, state, system and institution leaders should view CPL as an impactful strategy to increase equity in access to and completion of high-quality career pathways.

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WHAT IS CPL?[6]

CPL refers to the various processes for recognizing and awarding credit for college-level learning gained outside the classroom. It is often referred to as prior learning assessment. Common methods of assessing prior learning for credit include:

- *Standardized examination:* Learners can earn credit by successfully completing exams such as AP, CLEP, International Baccalaureate, Excelsior exams, DSST and others.

- *Faculty-developed challenge exam:* Learners can earn credit for a specific course by taking a comprehensive examination developed by campus faculty.

- *Portfolio-based and other individualized assessment:* Learners can earn credit by preparing a portfolio and/or demonstration of their learning from a variety of experiences and non-credit activities. Faculty then evaluate the learner's portfolio and award credit as appropriate.

- *Evaluation of non-college programs:* Learners can earn credit based on recommendations provided by the National College Credit Recommendation Service and the American Council on Education, which conduct evaluations of training offered by employers or the military.

- *Faculty review of credentials:* Institutions also engage faculty to conduct their own review of programs and certifications, including coordinating with workforce development agencies and other training providers to develop crosswalks that map between external training/credentials and existing degree programs.

In December 2021, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group convened the Credit for Prior Learning Shared Solutions Workgroup in service to the *New Skills ready network* sites. The members of the workgroup represented state postsecondary education agencies and governance boards, two- and four-year systems and institutions and national partner organizations. The workgroup was tasked with:

- Identifying the main barriers or challenges to building a robust and fully equitable system of CPL policies and practices;

- Exploring best practices related to statewide and local guidance on implementation of CPL to advance more accessible and equitable postsecondary programming, career pathway completion and credential attainment;

- Identifying existing resources or models to engage learners in using CPL within their career pathway; and

- Informing and contributing to tools and resources to support state and local leaders in the development and implementation of policies and practices that lead to effective, scaled use of CPL.

To meet its charge, the workgroup convened over six months, both virtually and in-person. The workgroup engaged with the existing body of research and tools on credit for prior learning to guide their approach to designing this Policy Benchmark Tool.[7,8,9] This tool is the result of the workgroup's hard work and expertise.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This policy benchmark tool serves as a comprehensive resource to empower state, system and institutional leaders to assess current CPL policy and practice to accelerate learners' completion of career pathways that lead to high-quality credentials.

State leaders may use this tool to assess the consistency of CPL policies across institutions and consider how state resources can be used to improve processes. States can also use this tool with collaborative workgroups of institutional leaders to investigate how policies collectively affect institutions. **System and institutional leaders** may find this tool useful in evaluating how equitably current CPL policy and practice are serving learners and identify ways to increase institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, the tool will allow users to:

- **Understand and document state, system and institutional CPL ecosystems;**
- **Leverage a framework for improving the effectiveness of CPL;**
- **Identify where CPL policy and practice are strong and where improvements can be prioritized; and**
- **Create an action plan to improve the effectiveness of CPL in their state, system or institution.**

The tool is divided into three sections to guide your team through a self-assessment of current CPL policies and practices. Ideally, you will convene a diverse team, composed of secondary and postsecondary leaders from two- and four-year colleges, as well as state education and workforce development agencies, to use this tool. We suggest working through this tool in order to achieve optimal results.

SECTION 1: EXAMINING THE CORE ELEMENTS

This section describes the five core elements of effective CPL policy at the state and institutional levels.

Any policy — be it regulatory, legislative or programmatic — related to the effective development and implementation of CPL should include and/or address the following core elements. While a CPL policy may include other elements, if a state, system or institution does not address the following list, its policy will not be able to ensure that CPL is effective and equitable. These are the detailed core elements and sub-elements to examine as you prepare to complete the rubric.

1 CPL Is an Established Statewide Priority

CPL is recognized as a lever to increase educational attainment and workforce participation through intentional policy and regulations. Policymakers promote a statewide system for CPL, elevate its value, and seek to remove barriers for learners.

a. State-level leaders support and promote CPL.

b. The state promotes a common CPL policy framework.

c. CPL is adequately funded and incentivized and is offered at no cost to learners.

2 CPL Values All Learners and High-Quality Postsecondary-Level Learning

Credit is awarded for postsecondary-level learning that reflects learners' range of life, occupational and educational backgrounds. At minimum, it recognizes validated or evaluated learning, such as work-based learning, on-the-job experiences, military experience, industry-recognized credentials and non-credit courses.

a. Multiple methods to earn CPL are consistently available to learners.

b. CPL opportunities are intentionally used to expand and promote access to and accelerated completion of career pathways for all learners.

c. CPL accelerates progress toward postsecondary credentials of value.

3 | CPL Processes Are Transparent, Seamless and Learner Centered

State and institutional CPL policies and practices center learners by making information and processes readily accessible, easy to understand and navigable.

a. The value of CPL and the options and process for earning it are communicated to learners early, often and accurately to meaningfully apply credit to academic and career goals.

b. There is a statewide approach to assessing, awarding and accepting CPL with clear expectations for institutions and learners.

c. Every learner's prior learning is automatically reviewed at key points of their educational journey.

4 | CPL Is Powered by High-Quality Data

Data and information about CPL are made available to learners, as well as institution leaders, faculty and policymakers to ensure equity, continuous improvement and labor market relevancy.

a. The state's CPL policy framework advances a research agenda and reporting system to improve statewide CPL processes, quality and outcomes.

b. The state and institutions collect data and publicly report on CPL processes, offerings and outcomes, disaggregated by demographics, socio-economic status and program area.

5 | CPL Enhances Institutional Effectiveness

Institutions make CPL a key aspect of their strategic and business plans, partnerships and internal culture to better serve learners.

a. Institutional leadership dedicates capacity and support, augmented with institute-wide buy-in, to promote a shared understanding of how to implement and sustain effective and equitable CPL policies.

b. Institutions use CPL to improve the alignment and articulation of non-credit and credit-bearing learning.

c. Institutional approaches to CPL include regular reviews of processes, ongoing professional development, and training for faculty and staff.

d. Institutions bring employers to the table early and often to ensure meaningful CPL options.

This rubric breaks down each core element into multiple sections so that you can fully analyze existing policies. To use this rubric, examine each core element and its components one at a time by reading the descriptions provided under "1 — Emerging" and "4 — Strong." Then assign a rating of 1, 2, 3 or 4 for each element row based on how your current policy compares to the examples in the rubric and provide a written rationale for that rating. Note that criteria are provided only for the low and high ends of the rubric, though states may fall somewhere in between. Once you have completed ratings for each row within an element, decide what rating the element merits overall. These ratings will help you prioritize and focus on the policy elements most in need of further review, analysis and potential revision.

RATINGS DEFINITIONS:

1 — Emerging: This component is not yet defined or is just beginning to emerge; current state or institutional policy meets few, if any, of the criteria listed.

2 — Building: This component has some bright spots, but many improvements still need to be made; it meets some of the criteria under 1, but key considerations allow for more optimism.

3 — Promising: This component is fairly well developed, though some improvements still need to be made; it meets some but not most of the criteria under 4 and is considered to be more developed than a 2.

4 — Strong: This component is extremely well developed and effective, even if minor adjustments still need to be made; it meets most of the criteria listed under 4.

TIP

You are strongly encouraged to choose only one of these four rating categories and not allow half-point ratings, which can weaken the prioritization of the five core elements. Keep in mind that this system is not a mathematical formula but rather a subjective rating based on objective evidence found in your existing state policy and current practice. Achieving a 4 rating in all categories is aspirational — an ideal future state that stakeholders are collaboratively working toward. States may experience political or structural limitations to achieving a 4. Do not let this discourage you, but instead adapt this tool to your particular state, postsecondary education system or institutional context. There are always ways to improve CPL, and this tool illustrates the many areas a state, system or institution could focus on to improve the effectiveness of CPL.

EQUITY IN CPL

State, system and institutional leaders have a responsibility to attend to equity as a central aspect of effective CPL. CAEL and WICHE's research shows that while Pell Grant recipients and Black adult learners experience the greatest completion boosts from earning CPL, they receive CPL at lower rates. It is critical that CPL policy and practice center learners' experiences with CPL to address barriers to access and use and to ensure that CPL is leveraged as a tool to open the door to high-quality career pathways for traditionally under-served learners. Equity is embedded throughout this rubric because any new or existing state, system or institutional policy or practice should intentionally prioritize ensuring that all learners have access to CPL and the support needed to use CPL throughout their career pathways.

1 | CPL Is an Established Statewide Priority

OVERALL RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

a. State-level leaders support and promote CPL.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong
• State-level leaders have not incorporated CPL in strategic plans or initiatives. • There is little to no capacity to support institutional or cross-institutional progress on implementing CPL.	• State-level champions promote the value of CPL widely. • There are dedicated resources and capacity for policy and practice at the state level. • A position at the state and/or system level (e.g., department of education, department of higher education, system leadership) has dedicated responsibility for implementing and monitoring CPL.

RATIONALE:

b. The state promotes a common CPL policy framework.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong
• The state does not have state-level policy or regulations related to CPL. • The state has not identified roles or workflows for a consistent approach to CPL.	• The state advances a shared definition of CPL that appears in statute and/or regulations. • The state identifies state, system and institutional roles for implementing and sustaining CPL. • The state uses its policy framework to promote equity in learners' access to and use of CPL in high-quality career pathways. • The state convenes and fosters collaboration across community colleges, four-year institutions, secondary education agencies, workforce development agencies and employers to enable the alignment of learning outcomes, credentials and high-wage, high-demand occupations; conduct outreach to learners about CPL; and ensure consistent implementation of policy and practice.

RATIONALE:

c. CPL is adequately funded and incentivized and is offered at no cost to learners.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong
• The state does not offer guidance on the use of funds to support CPL. • The state does not provide funding or financial incentives to increase institutional use of CPL. • The state does not allow financial aid to cover learner CPL costs. • Institutions do not provide any financial support to help learners use CPL.	• The state is braiding state and federal dollars to support CPL and offering guidance on the use of funds. • The state offers funding and/or incentives to institutions for CPL awards aligned to degrees and credentials. • The state aligns state financial aid policies to cover learners' CPL costs. • Institutions provide fee waivers, scholarships or other supports to help all learners use CPL.

RATIONALE:

2 **CPL Values All Learners and High-Quality Postsecondary-Level Learning**	**OVERALL RATING:** 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

a. Multiple methods to earn CPL are consistently available to learners.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	**4 — Strong**	**RATIONALE:**
• The state is not supporting a common system for awarding credit for non-college training (e.g., CPL crosswalks among occupations, industry credentials, non-credit programs and degree/credential programs). • Institutions offer very limited CPL options. • The state and institutions do not make information on CPL options publicly available.	• The state develops CPL crosswalks (e.g., among occupations, industry credentials, non-credit programs and degree/credential programs), including a diverse set of CPL methods that align with state-approved credentials, work-based learning, etc. • The state reviews its CPL crosswalks at least biannually to ensure that methods for awarding credit are equitable, relevant and accessible to all learners. • Institutions are using a variety of methods to assess prior learning, such as nationally normed and/or locally sourced exams, reviews of industry-recognized credentials, portfolios, skills demonstrations, military transcripts, etc. • The state inventories and publishes institutions' methods of awarding CPL. • The state provides recommended quality standards for the administration of diverse CPL methods.	

b. CPL opportunities are intentionally used to expand and promote access to and accelerated completion of career pathways for all learners.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	**4 — Strong**	**RATIONALE:**
• CPL is not a consideration during program approval or review. • The state and institutions do not view CPL as an enrollment or workforce development strategy and, therefore, do not make efforts to expand its use by learners.	• CPL is explicitly acknowledged in program approval policies and practices. • The state, systems and institutions identify priority sectors and programs to create and align CPL opportunities. • The state, systems and institutions assess at least biannually the barriers faced by learners in taking advantage of CPL, as well as its impact on persistence and completion, with a specific focus on closing equity gaps. • The state, systems and institutions develop explicit interventions and supports to increase access to CPL and reduce equity gaps in its use.	

c. CPL accelerates progress toward postsecondary credentials of value.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong	RATIONALE:
• CPL is not transferable among institutions within the state. • CPL is not available to a learner who completes non-credit learning. • The state, systems and institutions do not view or support CPL as a strategy to reduce learners' time to degree.	• CPL transfers with learners from one institution to another without requiring re-assessment. • CPL is used within individual institutions to value relevant non-credit programs as fulfilling the requirements of credit-bearing ones (thereby fostering stackable credential models). • Credit is awarded for prior learning that applies directly to learners' postsecondary degrees or credentials rather than toward electives. • The state promotes and leverages CPL to award early postsecondary credit to learners participating in career pathways in secondary education. • The state and institutions do not set limits on credit awarded for validated college-level learning beyond what is stipulated by the appropriate regional accreditor.	

3 CPL Processes Are Transparent, Seamless and Learner Centered

OVERALL RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

a. The value of CPL and the options and process for earning it are communicated to learners early, often and accurately to meaningfully apply credit to academic and career goals.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong	RATIONALE:
• Learners must seek out information on CPL on their own with little support from advisers. • Information on CPL is not readily available on state or institutional websites, through admissions or enrollment documents or through other avenues. • Within an institution, faculty and staff have very little information on or experience with CPL.	• CPL advising is provided systematically to all current and potential learners from high school through postsecondary education and workforce training. • Institutions offer CPL resources for a variety of key stakeholders, including learners, families and partner organizations such as high schools and community-based organizations. • Information about CPL is disseminated through a multi-pronged approach that leverages systematic advising, social media, email, a dedicated webpage, etc. • Institutions assess the effectiveness of their communications through learner feedback and data on CPL usage. • Information on CPL is accessible, including being translated into languages reflecting institutions' communities. • Institutions require faculty and staff to receive ongoing professional development on CPL that attends to the learner experience and outcomes.	

b. There is a statewide approach to assessing, awarding and accepting CPL with clear expectations for institutions and learners.		**RATING:** 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯
1 — Emerging	**4 — Strong**	**RATIONALE:**
• Institutions use individualized CPL processes with no guidance from the state. • There is no statewide approach for assessing, awarding or accepting CPL. • The state does not identify the role of CPL in designing seamless career pathways that include non-credit and credit-bearing learning.	• Learner-friendly resources are available that consistently document statewide and institutional processes and tools for reviewing and awarding CPL. • There is a statewide crosswalk for multiple CPL methods, augmented by a glossary of terms to reduce biases and promote a common understanding of CPL possibilities. • The state provides guidance and recommendations on assessment standards to ensure consistency across both two- and four-year institutions. • The state provides guidance and support to integrate non-credit and credit-bearing learning, including the navigation of accreditation processes. • Where a statewide crosswalk does not meet learners' needs, institutional processes are consistent and clearly defined.	

c. Every learner's prior learning is automatically reviewed at key points of their educational journey.		**RATING:** 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯
1 — Emerging	**4 — Strong**	**RATIONALE:**
• Institutions and systems do not have a mechanism for automatically awarding CPL. • Learners must proactively pursue CPL when they enroll in an institution or program. • CPL is re-assessed if learners transfer institutions and/or programs.	• Credits are awarded seamlessly and consistently across institutions in areas where prior learning has been crosswalked. • Institutions invest in resources that support the automatic awarding of credit, such as review staff, transcription and technology processes. • Institutions automatically award CPL for validated college-level learning before or upon enrollment in a program of study. • Institutions have CPL review processes to address prior learning that is not established or represented in a statewide crosswalk. • Institutions review prior learning again if a learner changes their program of study.	

4	CPL Is Powered by High-Quality Data	OVERALL RATING: 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

a. The state's CPL policy framework advances a research agenda and reporting system to improve statewide CPL processes, quality and outcomes.

RATING: 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

RATIONALE:

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong
• The state does not collect or analyze data on CPL processes, awards or outcomes on any regular basis. • The state does not have a common set of definitions or reporting requirements relative to CPL.	• The state policy framework stipulates regular data collection, reporting and review processes. • The state policy framework identifies key research questions to enable the evaluation of access to, use of and equity in CPL policy, practices and processes across the state. • The state uses data to better understand the quality of CPL by comparing the persistence, completion and course outcomes of learners earning CPL. • The state sets common CPL data definitions to allow effective data collection and analysis. • The state regularly reports on CPL to advance a common understanding of its usage, assess equity in access and usage, and recommend systematic improvements. • The state periodically reviews institutional CPL processes to ensure that they are current and to offer recommendations for continuous improvements. • The state ensures that data collection and reporting align with workforce metrics, including labor market information.

b. The state and institutions collect data and publicly report on CPL processes, offerings and outcomes, disaggregated by demographics, socio-economic status and program area.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

RATIONALE:

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong

• Institutions do not collect or analyze data on CPL processes, awards or outcomes.
 	
• Institutions have very little data infrastructure or capacity to collect or analyze CPL data.
 	
• The state does not collect or analyze data on CPL processes, awards or outcomes.
 	
• The state has little data infrastructure or capacity to collect and analyze statewide CPL data.
 	
• There are no publicly available data or reports on CPL access or outcomes at either the state or institutional level.
	• State, system and/or institutional leadership provides support that enables uniform data collection and maintenance.
	
	• Institutions collect and analyze data elements including:
	
	  • Learner-level data (e.g., enrollment in career pathways, persistence and completion rates for those who earned CPL, learner savings, qualitative data on learners' experiences with CPL).
	
	  • Program- and institutional-level data (e.g., successful and attempted credit awards, efficacy of communications and marketing strategies, institutional finance benchmarks).
	
	• The state collects data from institutions on relevant statewide metrics (e.g., attainment of credentials of value for those who earned CPL, savings of taxpayers money) and publicly reports findings to drive awareness and continuous improvement.
	
	• Key indicators are disaggregated based on race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, special population status and other equity metrics.
	
	• Data is interoperable, using the Credential Transparency Description Language where appropriate, to ensure consistency and use across data systems.
	
	• Institutions invest in data infrastructure and capacity.
	
	• The state makes aggregated institutional data publicly available as linked, open data.

5 CPL Enhances Institutional Effectiveness

OVERALL RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

a. Institutional leadership dedicates capacity and support, augmented with institute-wide buy-in, to promote a shared understanding of how to implement and sustain effective and equitable CPL policies.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong	RATIONALE:
• Institutions do not invest in capacity or structure to promote shared understanding of how to implement and sustain effective CPL policies. • Institutions do not engage partners in implementing effective CPL.	• Institutional leadership has established a dedicated staff position, workgroup or committee that has responsibility for developing concrete recommendations to improve CPL processes, assessment and awards. • The staff position or group charged with this work engages a diverse group of stakeholders, including faculty, advisers, administrators, employers, community groups, etc., to fulfill its charge. • The staff position or group annually reviews CPL data to inform recommendations. • The staff position or group evaluates any equity gaps in learners' access to or use of CPL.	

b. Institutions use CPL to improve the alignment and articulation of non-credit and credit-bearing learning.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong	RATIONALE:
• Institutions rely on manual, individual-by-individual processes for evaluating and awarding non-credit learning for credit-bearing learning. • Institutions have not identified career pathways that offer opportunities to increase enrollment and completion through CPL.	• Institutions use student information systems, learning management systems and emerging technologies to identify learners' pathways from non-credit to credit courses and assess aligned skills and competencies and labor market relevancy. • Institutions design seamless on-ramps from non-credit to credit-bearing learning opportunities.	

c. Institutional approaches to CPL include regular reviews of processes, ongoing professional development, and training for faculty and staff.

RATING:
1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	4 — Strong	RATIONALE:
• Institutions have little to no capacity or few or no systematic processes for evaluating the effectiveness of CPL or supporting faculty and staff.	• Institutions clearly define lead staff and other roles for implementing effective CPL. • Lead staff develops and deploys professional development for faculty and staff across the institution. • Institutions annually review methods and processes for awarding CPL and outcomes data to ensure continuous improvement	

d. Institutions bring employers to the table early and often to ensure meaningful CPL options.	**RATING:** 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯

1 — Emerging	**4 — Strong**	**RATIONALE:**
• Due to ineffective partnerships, employers are largely unaware of CPL. • Institutional partnerships with employers do not include efforts to improve CPL.	• Institutions support employers' understanding of CPL as a strategy to up- or re-skill workers, encouraging existing employees to use CPL. • Institutions engage employers to validate work-based learning and skills gained through work for CPL. • Institutions support employer partnerships with faculty on designing CPL options, assessments and awards.	
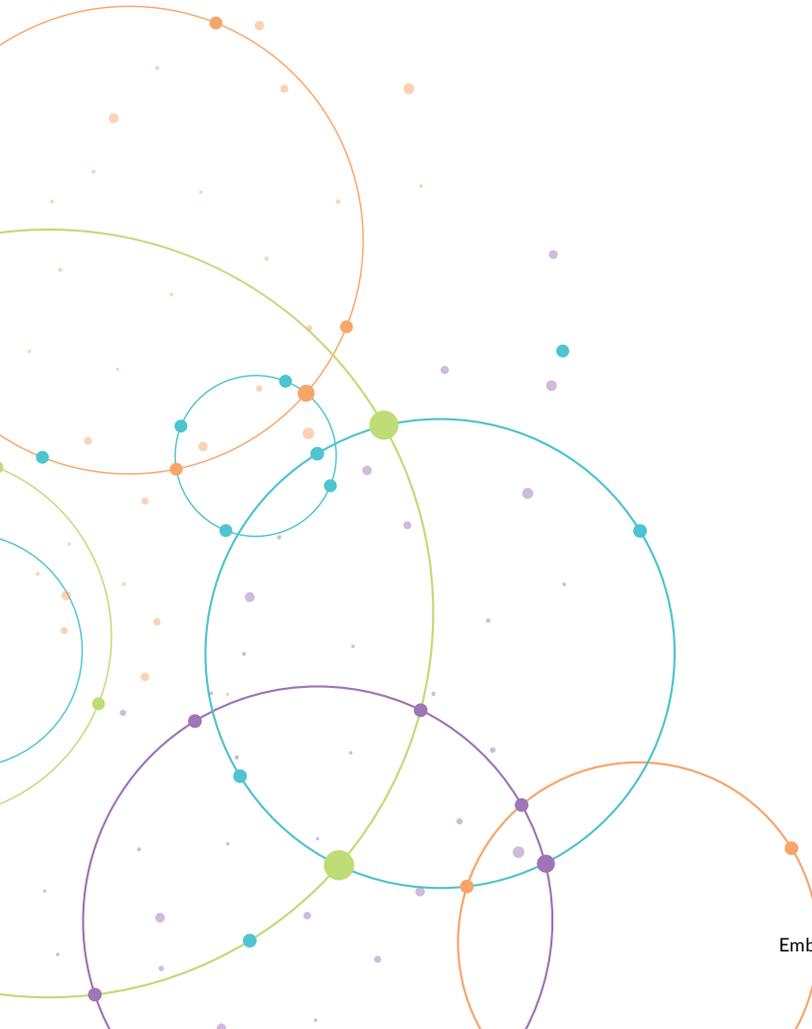
Once you have completed the rubric, this section will help you decide your next steps. You can use some or all of the templates provided in this section to guide planning, including setting goals, planning for stakeholder involvement and mitigating potential risks.

First, use the following summary table to record your ratings from the rubric. For example, if you gave element "2b: CPL opportunities are intentionally used to expand and promote access to and accelerated completion of career pathways for all learners" a 3, enter a 3 under "2" in row "b." Once you have done this for all ratings, you will get a sense of the full picture of your state, system or institutional policy and practices. Use this to determine your areas of strength and opportunities for the most growth. Keep these areas in mind as you continue to develop your action plan and priorities.

Step 1: Identify and Prioritize Challenges

	1 CPL Is an Established Statewide Priority	2 CPL Values All Learners and High-Quality Postsecondary-Level Learning	3 CPL Processes Are Transparent, Seamless and Learner Centered	4 CPL Is Powered by High-Quality Data	5 CPL Enhances Institutional Effectiveness
a.					
b.					
c.					
d.					

Average your scores to the nearest full point rating to get a sense of the full picture of your CPL policy and practice. Use these scores to determine your areas of strengths and opportunities for the most growth. Keep these areas in mind as you continue to develop your action plan and priorities.

Overall					
Your top strengths:					
Your top challenges:					

Step 2: Set Your Goals

Your action plan should be focused on addressing these barriers and shifting policy and practice in your state toward a 4 on the assessment rubric. In the following table, identify specific goals for improving each sub-element. Consider the SMART framework for goal setting. Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound.

Specific:	Measurable:	Attainable:	Relevant:	Time Bound:
In as much detail as possible, describe the challenge and what you hope to accomplish. Identify those responsible and accountable for meeting the goal.	Identify measures of success and how you plan to track progress.	Make sure the goal is realistic. Do you have the skill, will and resources to achieve this goal? If not, what is a more realistic goal? A good SMART goal is both ambitious and attainable.	Make sure the goal is related to your career readiness vision. How will it help you actualize this vision?	Set a specific date when the goal will be achieved.

SMART GOALS

List 3 to 5 SMART goals for improving your CPL policy and practices.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Step 3: Identify Resources

Determine what resources are available to help you achieve these goals. Do you have the support and capacity needed?

RESOURCE CATEGORY	RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN YOUR STATE, SYSTEM OR INSTITUTION
FUNDING What funds are available to achieve these goals? Consider public dollars (Perkins V, WIOA, state funding)*, philanthropic dollars and other sources of revenue.	
STAFFING What is your staffing capacity to support this work? How many institution-, system- and/or state-level personnel are available to support implementation?	
PARTNERSHIPS Can any existing partnerships with employers, state networks, associations, etc. support this work through in-kind aid or other resources?	
TECHNOLOGY What infrastructure is readily available and can be leveraged?	
OTHER Can any other resources be leveraged to support implementation of this action plan?	

*Note: Perkins V refers to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. WIOA is the acronym for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Step 4: Map the Work

Now that you have established SMART goals and identified the resources available to help achieve them, you are ready to map out your full action plan and identify the specific steps you will take to realize your goals for implementing effective CPL policy and practices. In the following table, list the specific activities needed to achieve each of your SMART goals. For each activity, identify a primary owner, a completion date and a measure of success. Refer back to Step 3 to identify the state levers for achieving this goal. Do you plan to enact new policy, invest in technology, leverage people or establish new processes?

SMART GOAL 1			
ACTIVITY	PRIMARY OWNER	COMPLETION DATE	SUCCESS METRICS
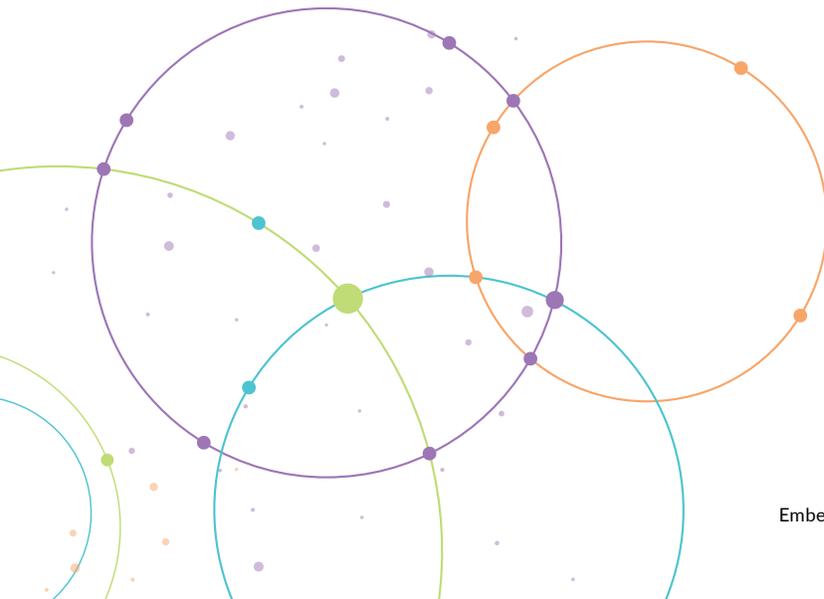
SMART GOAL 2			
ACTIVITY	**PRIMARY OWNER**	**COMPLETION DATE**	**SUCCESS METRICS**

SMART GOAL 3			
ACTIVITY	**PRIMARY OWNER**	**COMPLETION DATE**	**SUCCESS METRICS**

SMART GOAL 4			
ACTIVITY	**PRIMARY OWNER**	**COMPLETION DATE**	**SUCCESS METRICS**

SMART GOAL 5			
ACTIVITY	**PRIMARY OWNER**	**COMPLETION DATE**	**SUCCESS METRICS**

END NOTES

1. Klein-Collins, R., Bransberger, P., & Lane, P. (2021). *Equity Paradoxes in the PLA Boost: Opportunity Unrealized for Some Students Despite the Potential for Improved Credit Completion.* https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PLA-Equity-Brief-Snapshot-CAEL-WICHE-October-2021.pdf

2. Ibid.

3. García, R. M., & Leibrandt, S. (2020). *The Current State of Prior Learning Policies.* https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Current-State-of-PLA-Policies.pdf

4. Ibid.

5. Klein-Collins, R., Bransberger, P., & Lane, P. (2021). *Equity Paradoxes in the PLA Boost: Opportunity Unrealized for Some Students Despite the Potential for Improved Credit Completion.* https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PLA-Equity-Brief-Snapshot-CAEL-WICHE-October-2021.pdf

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS