
Non-Degree Credentials Task Force Report to the Provost

November 17, 2023

Executive Summary

Non-degree credentials at NC State offer vital benefits, foremost by catering to a diverse range of learners' needs and addressing the evolving landscape of higher education. These credentials also serve as an alternative revenue source and enhance degree-seeking student persistence and post-graduation employment outcomes. Integral to our land-grant mission and leveraging our strengths as a research-intensive institution, these programs drive educational innovation and strengthen industry partnerships.

The following recommendations are intended to position NC State to optimize our non-degree credentials, enhance our reputation as educational innovators, deepen alum connections, and contribute meaningfully to the community and the evolving educational landscape.

Recommendation 1: The task force recommends NC State adopt a set of guiding principles applicable to all NC State credentials, whether for-credit or non-credit.

Recommendation 2: The task force recommends that NC State centrally support the staff needed for the Office of Instructional Programs to ensure that all NC State microcredentials - for-credit and non-credit - meet the guiding principles.

Recommendation 3: The task force recommends establishment of a Community of Practice to develop expertise and establish best practice guidance for non-credit credentials.

Recommendation 4: The task force recommends establishment of a new procedural workflow for non-credit offerings through the Office of Instructional Programs.

Recommendation 5: The task force recommends that NC State implement strategies to 1) align non-credit credentials with appropriate for-credit courses and curricula, and 2) develop pathways between relevant non-credit credentials and for-credit certificates and degree programs.

Recommendation 6: The task force recommends that NC State identify and implement one standard badging platform to ensure central documentation of all non-credit credentials and facilitate data collection and reporting standards.

Recommendation 7: The task force recommends NC State identify an institutional-level funding model that grows non-credit credential activity through revenue sharing with academic units and comprehensive institutional support for the personnel, platforms and technologies, central services, and pilots recommended herein.

Recommendation 8: The task force recommends that the Office of Instructional Programs work with the University Budget Office to identify the potential for additional flexibility in university, UNC system, or state policies regarding non-degree credential development and delivery, and to work collaboratively to affect the desired policy changes.

Recommendation 9: The task force recommends that NC State develop the learner-centric terminologies and technological solutions necessary to ensure NC State microcredentials, and lifelong learning pathways, are easily accessible.

While some of the above recommendations can move forward with little to minimal financial investment, several may only be accomplished through added capacity within the Office of Instructional Programs.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
FOUNDATIONS.....	3
How the task force worked.....	3
Scope and terminology.....	4
Microcredential learners and benefits.....	6
For-credit vs. non-credit.....	8
Challenges and opportunities.....	9
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	11
Guiding principles.....	11
Policies, guidelines and procedures.....	12
Integrating for- and non-credit credentials.....	15
Digital platform.....	17
Funding sources and funding models.....	21
Marketing solutions.....	24
Timeline and action plan.....	25
APPENDICES.....	26

Figures and Tables

Figure 1. NC State credentials landscape.....	4
Table 1. NC State German minor and undergraduate certificate requirements.....	5
Table 2. Microcredential benefits to learners and NC State.....	7
Table 3. For-credit vs. non-credit considerations.....	8
Figure 2. Communities of Practice vs. other typical groups.....	13
Figure 3. Proposed workflow steps and purpose.....	14
Table 4. Required and preferred features for a microcredential digital platform.....	18
Table 5. Typical funding models for non-credit programs at NC State.....	22

FOUNDATIONS

Non-degree credentials at NC State offer vital benefits, foremost by catering to a diverse range of learners' needs and addressing the evolving landscape of higher education. These credentials also serve as an alternative revenue source and enhance degree-seeking student persistence and post-graduation employment outcomes. Integral to our land-grant mission and leveraging our strengths as a research-intensive institution, these programs drive educational innovation and strengthen industry partnerships. By optimizing our non-degree credentials, we enhance our reputation as educational innovators, deepen alum connections, and contribute meaningfully to the community and the evolving educational landscape.

In line with our dedication to educational excellence and innovation, NC State offers thousands of non-degree programs yearly. Yet, despite this impressive output, NC State has significant areas for improvement and opportunities for growth. We currently face challenges like limited institutional support, operational inefficiencies, a lack of consistent guidelines, financial uncertainties, and a siloed culture in continuing and lifelong learning. Immense potential exists to address these issues by tactically implementing the task force's recommendations herein.

These proposed changes are poised to revolutionize NC State's non-degree offerings, not only elevating operational efficiency and promoting campus-wide collaboration but also ensuring quality that reflects the institution's educational brand identity, enhancing financial stability, and advocating for innovation in educational approaches and content. This strategic shift is not just about keeping pace with educational trends; it opens doors to vast opportunities for innovation and accessibility. It aligns seamlessly with our broader university mission, affirming NC State's position as a frontrunner in the evolving realm of higher education.

How the task force worked

The task force received its charge from the Provost on April 4, 2023 (Appendix A) and began meeting in late April. Four subgroups were formed to carry out the charged work (see Appendix B for subgroup leadership and membership). Those groups focused on:

- Definitions, policies, guidelines, and procedures
- Integrating for- and non-credit processes, including stacking of credentials and prior learning assessment (PLA)

- Digital platform considerations
- Funding sources and models

From April to October 2023, the full task force met biweekly to share updates and address cross-cutting issues and questions. During the same period, each subgroup met independently and pursued its own portion of the charge. Collectively, the task force assembled and reviewed nearly 40 reports, articles, and publications from national associations and leading universities in this space. They conducted interviews with select universities and with more than 20 NC State entities offering non-credit instruction or in key administrative offices (Appendix C).

On October 31, 2023, the task force presented select draft recommendations to a stakeholder audience of approximately 25 associate deans, faculty and non-credit program instructors, CES and IES representatives, and other administrators and staff.

Each of these steps informed the recommendations herein.

Scope and terminology

The task force created a landscape graphic representing all credentials offered by NC State, along with their associated artifacts of learning achievement, in order to clarify which credentials are considered *microcredentials* (or *non-degree credentials*) (Figure 1).

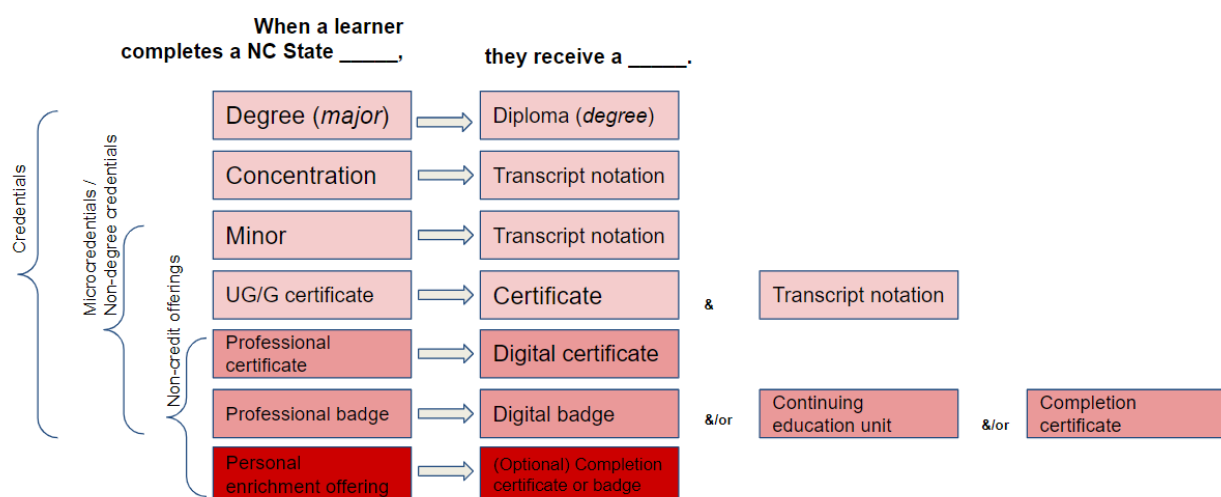


Figure 1. NC State credentials landscape

The task force elected to define *microcredentials*, or *non-degree credentials*, more broadly than some peer universities and university systems have done. By embracing a broader definition of microcredentials - inclusive of both for- and non-credit offerings - the task force believes NC State will be better positioned to consider the holistic possibilities of proposals and approaches for new credentials below the degree level. This broader definition may also allow easier and more efficient mechanisms to identify and pursue options for stackability and/or prior learning assessment. And, a broad view of microcredentials may help ensure consistent application of NC State's definitions and criteria for microcredentials, some of which are nearly identical in purpose, content, and requirements (see example in Table 1).

Table 1. NC State German minor and undergraduate certificate requirements

Minor in German	Certificate in German
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire proficiency in a second language, understanding the culture, and knowledge of the countries in which the language is spoken. 15 credit hours FLG 201 and FLG 202 or 212 required (6 hours) Remaining credits are from list of approved electives (9 hours) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop competence in and knowledge of the language; increased understanding and appreciation of German, Austrian, and Swiss cultures; and greater knowledge of the countries where German is spoken. 12 credit hours FLG 201 and FLG 202 or 212 required (6 hours) - 201 credit may be achieved through placement credit Remaining credits are 300-level German courses

The following umbrella terms are used throughout this report.

- Credential - NC State credentials include degrees (associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral-levels), minors, undergraduate and graduate certificates, professional certificates, and badges. Each credential is composed of two elements - 1) the educational offering itself, with defined learning outcomes and curricula, and 2) the artifact received by the learner and documented by the university upon their meeting defined completion requirements.
- Microcredential (or non-degree credential) - Any NC State credential, whether for credit or non-credit, at a level lower than the associates degree; this includes minors, undergraduate and graduate certificates, professional certificates, and badges. Each credential is composed of two elements - 1) the educational offering itself, with defined learning outcomes and curricula, and 2) the artifact received by the learner and

documented by the university upon their meeting defined completion requirements.

- Non-credit offering - A subset of NC State microcredentials that are not for credit; this includes professional certificates, Continuing Education Units (CEUs), badges, and personal enrichment offerings. Personal enrichment offerings may or may not result in the learner receiving a documented artifact of learning upon meeting defined completion requirements.

The task force also reviewed, and took steps to refine, definitions for minors, concentrations, for-credit certificates, post-baccalaureate certificates, professional certificates, professional badges, and personal enrichment offerings (Appendix D). Additionally, there's a recognition of the potential need for new types of credentials, like industry-recognized credentials and stackable credentials, to meet evolving educational and professional demands. The Office of Instructional Programs should continue to lead efforts to refine these definitions, and examine how existing credentials fit or do not fit with them, as work towards the recommendations of this report continues.

Relatedly, the task force made several notable observations regarding certificates and minors that merit further review and may impact future strategies regarding these two categories of microcredentials. First, minors are neither reviewed at the Provost level before approval nor assessed independent of a related degree program once they are approved. The university may consider instituting a simple but uniform set of learning objectives and assessment practices for all minors. Undergraduate minors have significantly higher enrollments than undergraduate certificates; the opposite is observed at the graduate level. At both levels, several established certificates have shown no enrollments for some time. Whereas graduate certificates are eligible for federal financial aid, undergraduate certificates are not. While NC State could pursue financial aid eligibility for undergraduate certificates, it may be challenging to meet federal requirements around minimum certificate length (one year) and gainful employment rules. Finally, the purpose and composition of post-baccalaureate certificates remains unclear.

Although NC State's undergraduate certificate programs are currently ineligible for financial aid, additional work is required to understand and address the factors contributing to low enrollment. Emerging national evidence supports the potential of certificates and other microcredentials to highlight individual skills and knowledge, improve employability, and promote ongoing learning.

Microcredential learners and benefits

The task force worked to identify categories of learners served by existing or envisioned NC State microcredentials. Currently enrolled students, working professionals seeking to upskill, retirees, alumni, and NC State employees are some of the main categories of learners who may be interested in microcredentials offered by NC State.

User stories - short descriptions of products or services told from the perspective of the person who wants them - may help the university maintain focus on developing and delivering high-value products and services to its key audiences. User stories are often three-part: who is the user, what do they want, and why do they want it. Three sample user stories for NC State microcredentials are:

*“As a **NC State MEAS major**, I want to efficiently and affordably add a microcredential for **specialized knowledge and skills in design thinking**, so that I can demonstrate to employers my ability to contribute innovative solutions, ideas, products and services.”*

*“As a **mid-level technology manager and NC State alum**, I want a high quality microcredential that strengthens my **analytical and decision-making skills** from a university that I trust so that I can lead more effectively in my current role.”*

*“As a **father of two making ends meet**, I want an efficient, affordable, employer-valued microcredential that allows me to learn **foundational web development skills** so that I can seek higher paying opportunities with better future prospects.”*

The task force identified many benefits that microcredentials offer to learners and to the university (Table 2).

Table 2. Microcredential benefits to learners and NC State

Benefits to learners	Benefits to the university
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credential from a known brand and credible provider • Agile, innovative curricula that are broadly accessible • A meaningful step towards a bigger goal / realization of a path to deeper (lifelong) learning • Distinction in the marketplace / pursuit of a leisure activity • An opportunity to learn with family, friends and colleagues, or make new ones - “Create your own cohort / Build 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fulfilled mission (public and private partner engagement, transformed lives in NC and beyond, etc.) • Partnership opportunities with employers, communities, and state legislators • A “test bed” where ideas are rapidly launched and improved • Enhanced visibility and reputation • Increased pool of people with an NC State experience (“alumni”)

your own Pack” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of pride and achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversified unit / institutional revenue streams
--	--

For-credit vs. non-credit

A key question that the task force engaged is how to determine when an offering should be developed as for-credit, non-credit, or both. Faculty and staff who have ideas for meeting identified learner needs through a new microcredential currently have little guidance available to them regarding how this can be accomplished. Table 3 offers considerations that may be useful to them early in their curriculum development efforts.

Table 3. For-credit vs. non-credit considerations

	Consider for-credit if...	Consider non-credit if...
Who?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content has known learner appeal and a value proposition with a long time horizon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content has known learner appeal and a value proposition of any time horizon. • The learner appeal and/or time horizon for the value proposition is uncertain or untested.
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target learner highly values a degree or academic credit. • The initiator has scholarship and discovery goals related to the content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target learner highly values professional or personal enrichment. • The initiator does not have scholarship and discovery goals related to the content.
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semester, half-semester, or summer session delivery best satisfies the target learner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible, convenient delivery unconstrained by academic calendars best satisfies the target learner. • Content production and/or delivery is needed or wanted quickly or just-in-time.
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning requirements include expectations regarding time spent and/or assessments (e.g. clinicals, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning requirements do not include expectations regarding time spent and/or assessments. • A community partner, employer, or other external collaborator or funder are working with NC State to develop and/or deliver the content.

Challenges and opportunities

Throughout the course of their work, the task force identified several challenges that may have kept, and may still be keeping, NC State from pursuing the benefits of microcredentials more aggressively.

Insufficient university-level support and engagement

A noticeable gap in institutional visibility and support for outreach and non-credit initiatives has led to a lack of departmental and faculty engagement in these crucial educational activities. Said another way, few NC State colleges and departments currently partner with NC State Continuing and Lifelong Education (NCSCaLE) to create and deliver non-credit offerings. Little room exists for non-credit activity in faculty workloads. Non-credit instruction, often considered as service or engagement with constituents outside of the university, may not be as recognized or as valued as other realms of faculty responsibility in the reappointment, promotion and tenure process.

Operational inefficiencies

Currently, NC State faculty and staff can easily and independently pursue the development and delivery of non-credit microcredentials without the assistance of NCSCaLE or another central office. A downside of that complete autonomy is that each individual and entity “recreates the wheel.” Lack of standardized processes and policies for non-credit offerings creates operational inefficiencies, jeopardizes quality assurance, and increases administrative costs.

Lack of cohesive guidelines

If one were to assume today that two NC State non-credit microcredentials awarding similar digital badges were similar or consistent in their requirements or learner experiences, that assumption would likely be false. Additional meaningful differentiation is desired among non-credit microcredentials awarding digital badges and certificates. Further, the absence of guiding principles for *all* NC State credentials - both for- and non-credit - risks brand dilution and inconsistencies across offerings. It also impedes NC State’s ability to develop non-credit to credit pathways that may attract lifelong learners.

Financial sustainability

NC State faculty and staff who offer non-credit credentials today are doing so with limited central resourcing and support. They can lack basic information about how and when their revenues can be used, leading to missed opportunities. Well-defined financial

models for sustainability - both institutionally and for individual programs - is currently lacking in the non-credit space.

A culture of decentralization

Units often tolerate inefficiencies, incoherence, and limited resources because those challenges are perceived to be less costly to the unit than losing local control altogether. Said another way, a high value is placed on autonomy and local control. Attempts to centralize aspects of non-credit credential decision-making and resources will be viewed as a loss of autonomy and control. The value and benefits of centralized actions and resources must be made clear and irrefutable, and value-based aspects of work that remain unchanged must be reinforced.

The consequences of these challenges are tangible and visible. For example, NC State misses opportunities to collaborate with industry partners in developing specialized programs that address specific workforce needs and prepare learners for current industry demands. We underutilize microcredentials as a tool to strengthen alumni engagement and involvement in mentorship, networking, and development activities. The lack of infrastructures, strategies, and resources to pursue those and other opportunities means that NC State is also poorly positioned to capitalize on microcredentials as an alternative revenue source. By attending to our challenges, we can expand NC State's educational portfolio and attract new demographics, which could open up new funding channels and revenue streams.

What follows are the task force's recommendations for introducing the policy and procedural frameworks necessary to ensure quality microcredentials and protect the university's strong brand while also maximizing efficiency and the potential for innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Guiding principles

The task force envisions opportunities where non-credit credentials offered by the university are evaluated for credit and potentially embedded in courses, certificates, or other components that stack towards an NC State degree. In order to realize this vision, it is important that all NC State credentials, credit bearing and not credit bearing, start from some common foundations.

Recommendation 1: The task force recommends NC State adopt a set of guiding principles applicable to ***all*** NC State credentials, whether for-credit or non-credit:

1. **Learning Outcomes:** Each credential will have defined learning outcomes, encompassing the specific body of knowledge and skills to be acquired. Outcomes are articulated in a relevant and easily understandable manner to learners and employers, ensuring alignment with expectations.
2. **Completion Requirements:** Each credential will have defined completion requirements.
3. **Quality Assurance:** Credentials will have established processes to ensure the high quality of the curriculum and instruction. The department or unit developing the credential is primarily responsible for quality assurance locally, maintaining and overseeing adherence to the standards within their specific discipline or subjects; for its purposes, the university may require standard evaluation questions or instruments.
4. **Completion Documentation:** The completion of each learner's credential will be centrally documented, ensuring a unified and transparent record-keeping system.

This recommendation received unanimous support when presented at the October 31, 2023 stakeholder session. Participants expressed appreciation for the intent and effort to drive quality and consistency and to keep NC State's brand strong and viable.

Policies, guidelines and procedures

The task force envisions that a certain degree of centralization will be required to help ensure that existing and new for- and non-credit credentials follow the proposed guiding principles. Policies and procedures associated with for-credit credentials are long-standing and robust; however, no such uniform policies and procedures exist in the non-credit space and must be created.

Recommendation 2: The task force recommends that NC State centrally support the staff needed for the Office of Instructional Programs to ensure that all NC State microcredentials - for-credit and non-credit - meet the guiding principles.

Added capacity in the Office of Instructional Programs (OIP) can assist faculty and staff by

- conducting market research;
- helping establish partnerships between colleges and other instructional units;
- collaborating closely with academic units to bolster instructional design;
- managing non-credit credential administrative duties and logistics, including any standard digital platform for non-credit credentialing
- assisting with the design and/or deployment of the evaluations and performing outcome-driven assessments;
- helping in the development and modeling of comprehensive budgets and identified funding sources;
- securing seed funding for initial project components;
- overseeing all non-credit reporting and assessment requirements by external entities (e.g. SACSCOC, UNC System, etc.)
- building a community of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in evidence-based research and curriculum enhancement; and,
- advocating for faculty engagement and aiding in their professional development.

The proposed additional OIP staff will provide comprehensive support and ensure attainment of all guiding principles; that said, the task force spent considerable time on the guiding principle regarding quality assurance. This guiding principle must be pursued in close cooperation with faculty and staff. The task force considered several ideas for policies and procedures that could help ensure the quality of non-credit credentials. The idea receiving the task force's highest support in terms of its feasibility, desirability, and impact was to establish a Community of Practice for non-credit credentials.

Recommendation 3: The task force recommends establishment of a Community of Practice to develop expertise and establish best practice guidance for non-credit credentials.

The Division of Academic and Student Affairs is in the process of establishing several Communities of Practice (CoPs) and defines them as follows:

Communities of Practice (CoPs) help to build/foster relationships between interested individuals, including faculty, staff, and students, from across the university (Community). These communities convene around areas of shared interest (Domain) and strive to organically deepen members' knowledge and expertise by identifying and incorporating best practices and solving problems. A thriving CoP may result in a set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories, and artifacts that community members share (Practice).

Communities of Practice differ from other typical group types in that their purpose is to develop expertise, their membership is self-selected, and they are committed to improving the expertise and practices of the members (Figure 2).

Group Types	Function	Basis of Membership	Basis of Cohesion	Duration
Communities of Practice	Develop members' expertise and define their place or role in the community	Self selected	Commitment and identification with the expertise that forms the basis of the practice	As long as members have an interest in improving the practice and maintaining the community
Formal Work Teams (e.g., committees, councils)	Perform the ongoing work that has been assigned to the team (e.g., formal charge , produce and deliver a product or service)	Everyone who has been assigned to the team (required, providing expertise, representing others)	Job/performance requirements and continuing, common goals	Until the work or the organization is reorganized
Project Teams and Task Forces	Accomplish a specific task or assignment (formal charge), usually during a particular time frame	As assigned by the management (required, providing expertise, representing others)	Project milestones and goals	Until the project or task has been completed
Informal Networks (e.g., affinity groups)	Collect and share information of common interest	Reciprocal value and acceptance, that is, members obtain and provide information of value	Perceived value in belonging and participating	As long as people have a reason to connect and share information

Adapted from: <https://www.nickols.us/CoPCharacteristics.htm>

Figure 2. Communities of Practice vs. other typical groups

Source: DASA Communities of Practice training slidedeck, received from Kesha Reed, October 9, 2023.

The proposed staff additions in OIP, along with the proposed Community of Practice, will become the thought leaders who build out the particulars of the process and guidance needed. That said, the task force did imagine a high-level procedural workflow and components that would be widely helpful to faculty and staff.

Recommendation 4: The task force recommends establishment of a new procedural workflow for non-credit offerings through the Office of Instructional Programs.

The task force arrived at the high-level procedural workflow components in Figure 3 after a process of imagining and listing activities required to establish non-credit credentials that meet the guiding principles and then testing the essential nature of each of their listed activities. In other words, the components shown below are the remaining steps believed by the task force to be necessary for establishing non-credit credentials that meet the proposed guiding principles. In identifying the minimum required steps, the task force strove to preserve opportunities for autonomy, efficiency, and innovation to the highest extent possible.

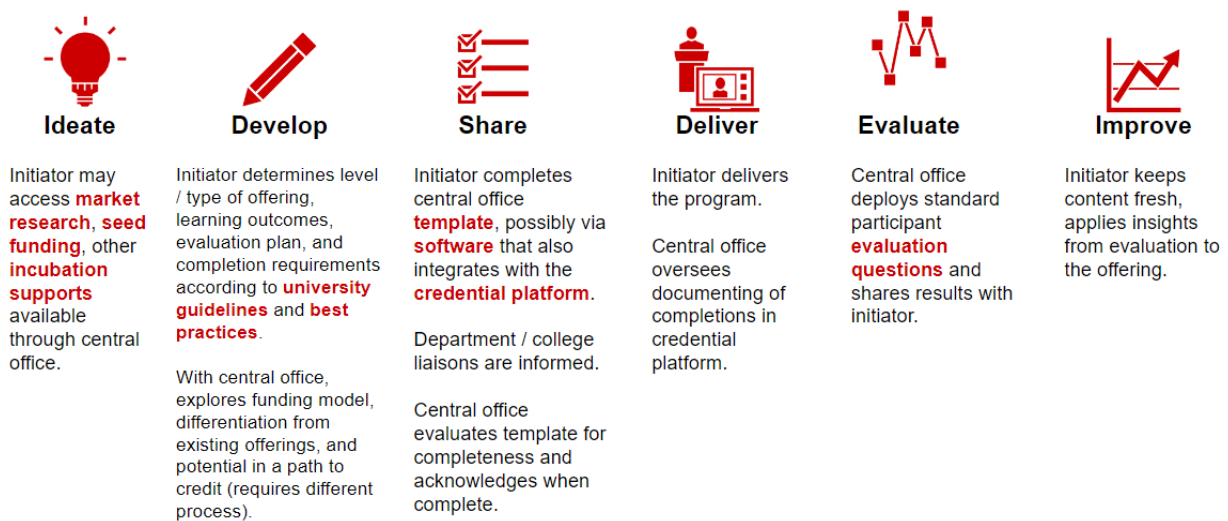


Figure 3. Proposed workflow steps and purpose

Considerable future work is needed to build out each component of this proposed workflow. For example, the template noted in the “Share” step must be created. The task force received some examples from other institutions, such as SUNY Buffalo (Appendix E) and can build upon the existing template used by NCSCaLE to collect metadata for digital badges (Appendix F). The standard evaluation questions noted in the “Evaluate” step may be informed by existing tools like that in place through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) (Appendix G).

The recommendation for a new workflow received strong favorable support (75%) when presented at the stakeholder session. Stakeholders felt such a workflow would bring needed process transparency, but they also sought more details about several steps. For example, what does the envisioned department or college liaison do? Exactly what aspects of evaluation are centralized and how? In general, the stakeholders were not opposed to centralization of the high-level workflow steps as long as efficiency is not sacrificed. Value-added support must outweigh any loss in local autonomy. It may be prudent to pilot the proposed workflow with one

or two initiatives ahead of its wholesale adoption.

Integrating for- and non-credit credentials

The task force believes that the proposed guiding principles, infrastructure and processes will foster the university's proactive, holistic thinking about opportunities to integrate for- and non-credit credentials. Indeed, several universities have already made steps towards this aim. The task force reviewed existing non-credit to for-credit initiatives at several institutions, including Louisiana State University, University of Arizona, Purdue University, Rutgers University, Iowa University, and the University of Texas system. Examples from these institutions highlighted several conditions under which non-credit to for-credit pathways are desirable, such as when:

- Skill sets between non-credit and credit offerings are clearly linked (i.e. the course conduit for credit articulation and the credit received are clear)
- Employers demonstrably value both the non-credit and for-credit components
- It presents a recruitment and marketing opportunity (i.e. the non-credit experience “whets your appetite” about [*degree program*])
- It keeps the university engaged with a population, for example those who may not have been admitted to degree programs to which they applied
- There's a federal / state requirement to do it (e.g. military credit)

With these “desirability criteria” in mind, the task force considered specific non-credit to for-credit opportunities for NC State. They identified three broad categories of interest that have the potential to serve as instructive pilots for the university.

Supplemental / parallel offerings

Identify sustainable funding mechanisms and encourage degree-seeking students to pursue valuable non-credit offerings. See Florida International University and the University of Texas System.

Example: existing Design Thinking non-credit certificate could provide supplemental value to many undergraduate degree programs.

Credential stacking

Identify valuable industry / professional certifications that could receive credit within a graduate certificate and then stack one or more graduate certificates towards a master's degree. See Louisiana State University and Purdue University.

Example: External professional IT certifications could be given credit towards graduate certificates, which then stack into master's.

The Graduate School has drafted a policy that would allow coursework from more than one earned graduate certificate to be applied towards the credit hour requirements for earning a master's degree (Appendix H). At the time of this report, the policy remains in draft form and requires additional review before going into effect.

Professional development paths

Translate NC State's discipline- or affinity-based professional development offerings into credit towards graduate-level credentials.

Example: Poole College Women in Technical Leadership program experiences could be considered for credit in Poole College degree programs.

Recommendation 5: The task force recommends that NC State implement strategies to 1) align non-credit credentials with appropriate for-credit courses and curricula, and 2) develop pathways between relevant non-credit credentials and for-credit certificates and degree programs.

This recommendation received strong favorable support (86%) when presented at the stakeholder session. While stakeholders were interested in both suggested strategies, their interest in credential stacking pathways exceeded their interest in aligning non-credit credentials with courses and curricula by 2:1.

The task force acknowledges that the recommended strategies will be challenging to pilot and implement and ultimately may not have widespread applicability. For example, at institutions like the University of Cincinnati, Louisiana State University, or Purdue Global, where prior learning assessment (PLA) is policy-enabled and encouraged, active utilization appears limited to select degree programs. In these programs, it is possible to document the equivalency of non-credit work to collegiate-level content and instruction relevant to the degree. Despite the challenges, where it is successfully implemented, the benefits of prior learning assessment to learners can be substantial. Purdue Global reports that over 2,800 students have completed its portfolio development course and saved up to 3.5 terms in their degree progression (<https://www.purdueglobal.edu/alternative-college-credits/portfolio-development/>). A focused strategy at NC State can help enhance departmental engagement and maximize benefits to students.

Finally, it should be noted that accreditation standards, whether SACSCOC or other, must be explored in full relative to these strategies and may affect NC State's ability to enact them.

Digital platform

Throughout this report, the task force has recommended more coordinated, centralized approaches to the design and delivery of microcredentials. A shared digital platform for credentialing aligns with this direction and affords opportunities for cost savings and operational efficiencies.

Recommendation 6: The task force recommends that NC State identify and implement one standard badging platform to ensure central documentation of all non-credit credentials and facilitate data collection and reporting standards.

Implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for our continuing and lifelong learning programs is essential for several reasons. Unlike degree-seeking students, who benefit from established systems to track their registration, progress, and credentials, our lifelong learners lack such a comprehensive framework. The absence of a centralized registration and credentialing system means that these learners are not recognized as returning students. Each time they wish to enroll in a new course or program, they must navigate the registration process anew, which can be cumbersome and discouraging. Furthermore, without a CRM, we are missing significant opportunities to leverage data analytics and CRM tools to actively support and engage our learners. A robust CRM system would enable us to analyze student interests and learning preferences more effectively, suggest tailored future learning paths, and foster a sense of belonging. By treating our learners as integral members of the "Wolfpack" rather than as outsiders, we can enhance their educational experience and strengthen their connection to our institution. This approach benefits the learners and aligns with our commitment to providing lifelong educational opportunities.

The task force interviewed 11 NC State organizations that use, or are interested to use, digital platforms to manage and distribute digital badges and/or certificates to participants. These included NCSCaLE, Registration and Records, Poole College Executive Education, Extension Apiculture, DELTA, Data Sciences Academy, Finance and Administration, Textiles, Food Science, Industry Expansion Services and WolfPack Wellness.

Interviewees provided user requirements for a digital platform, summarized in Table 4 below. Most interviewees were currently using Credly to award badges for their programs, and REPORTER, an NC State supported tool, for their registration management. Credly offers tiered badge pricing; the larger the volume of credentials awarded, the lower the per-badge cost. As an example, the cost to award 500 credentials a year is \$4.00 per badge, or \$2,000 whereas the cost to award 10,000 credentials a year is \$1.50 per badge, or \$15,000 (per Dan Gerger's contact with a Credly representative on November 15, 2023). A fully centralized model, with

badges issued through one unit, could likely be managed by a single dedicated staff member. A distributed model for issuing badges in individual units would likely exceed 1.0 FTE of support.

The requirements gathered and summarized in Table 4 serve to confirm the desirability of Credly as a potential solution for NC State, as Credly meets all required and most preferred features. That said, several other options exist, including Acclaim by Pearson, Accredible, Canvas Credentials, Degreed, and Mozilla Backpack. Additionally, marketplace developments are happening quickly in this space such that new tools that may soon be available for evaluation may support both the registration function of REPORTER and the badging function of Credly.

Table 4. Required and preferred features for a microcredential digital platform

Required features	Metadata	<p>Badges must have metadata that describes what the badge or certificate entails. The metadata must be able to include learning objectives, competencies, skills, and program information at a minimum.</p> <p>Badges must allow users to find the metadata.</p> <p>The badging platform must have easy ways for programs to create metadata.</p>
	Easily-shareable credentials that expand recognition and value	Credentials that a participant receives for any kind of program participation should be easily shareable with any audience as widely as they wish to do so (internal, external, social media, LinkedIn, job sites, etc.)
	Lifelong access: Always available/traceable credentials	The system must allow users to move credentials to a different platform if desired.
	Verifiable & secure	<p>Credentials must be verified as legitimately issued by NC State to the recipient through tamper-proof technology.</p> <p>Verification of a badge by an employer or other organization must be easy to obtain.</p>
	Integration & interoperability with current NC State systems	<p>Single sign-on authentication (either using Shibboleth or Google SSO) is required.</p> <p>Integration with systems such as student records, LMSs, ERPs (important for single sign-on and connecting badges to academic records).</p>

		Must have an API that we can use to build integrations with homegrown systems (for example, REPORTER is used by all of our users already for registration).
	Granularity/local administrative control	<p>Program admins must be able to (1) create and issue badges at their local unit level and (2) manage their own badges without being able to manage badges for other programs.</p> <p>Must allow customizable landing pages for the programs so that programs are free to define and describe their programs.</p>
	Custom branding and badge design	<p>Ability to create badges using customized program images.</p> <p>Unified look and feel for badges (recognizable as an NC State brand).</p>
	Reporting and analytics	Reporting functionality to track badge statistics such as issuances, acceptances, sharing, labor market data, etc.
	Stability and reliability	Robust infrastructure, minimal downtime, and a history of reliable performance.
	Wide adoption and acceptance	Track record of widespread adoption and acceptance as a reliable platform for delivering verified credentials.
	Flexible business model	<p>Ability to accommodate fee-based programs as well as no-cost credentialing.</p> <p>Integrated ecommerce capabilities.</p>
Preferred features	Automation within the system to track and stack credentials	Ability to get a “mega credential” of some kind after getting a number of smaller “micro credentials” - a way to track and show the stacking of the work within the system would be helpful.
	Advanced reporting capabilities	A system that has reporting with the capability to identify who might be eligible for a badge or certificate based on the number of workshops or courses they participated in.

		Reporting/Analytics should provide data-driven insights.
	Ability to award multiple artifact types	A system that can award both a badge and/or a certificate; e.g. whatever artifact a particular program chooses to provide should be able to be managed by the system we choose.
	Advanced workflows	Have workflows and governance paths built into the system (e.g. allows proposals, has a repository and documentation) - similar to CIM on the for-credit side.
	Integration & interoperability with current NC State systems	<p>Ability to support two identity providers is strongly preferred (and perhaps required) so that we could leverage both Unity and Brickyard identities.</p> <p>Note: Ideally, from the administrative perspective, integrations would allow for programmed workflows where credentials could be automatically awarded without a hands-on review as well as easy approval workflows for credentials that need to be approved prior to being awarded.</p>

In addition to platform requirements, interviewees offered observations on the following:

Visual branding and representation

NC State has existing standards for digital badges and their formats (Appendix J); however, the scope of badging activity has expanded since these were created. They need to be updated to account for the variety in activities awarding badges and their requirements for learners. There is broad recognition that not all badges are “created equal.” Time required to earn the badge is an easy way to differentiate but less desirable than determining some way to distinguish badges by competency levels (e.g. fundamental, intermediate or advanced) or employer-recognized tasks and roles. Interviewees also sought more flexibility regarding allowable visual differentiations.

REPORTER

While REPORTER is widely used as a registration and tracking system for training and non-credit activities, additional development is needed to improve the user interface design, improve reporting and inquiry capabilities, and build out additional features requested by users. Without either growing the for-pay base of REPORTER users, increasing user fees, or central support, this desired development is unlikely to occur.

Data collection and reporting

Data extraction requirements must be considered at the outset of any effort to identify a platform. The platform must be implemented to ensure that NC State collects the information required on the learner side to produce the desired downstream reports. Data collection and reporting will prove challenging, and possibly ineffective, if these considerations are an afterthought.

Recognizing excellence

The existing Continuing Education and Professional Development (CPE) Rubric from Quality Matters could be used, or used to develop, an initiative that recognizes well-designed non-credit courses and programs. This will also help with the general need to recognize and reward faculty and staff who participate in this work.

The recommendation for a single shared digital platform received strong favorable support (84%) when presented at the stakeholder session. Stakeholders expressed a strong desire to preserve as much local autonomy as possible when managing the envisioned platform; however, they also recognized that some non-credit programs are significantly complex and could utilize central support for actions in the digital platform. The stakeholders were hopeful that a central platform, and the improvements it would likely bring regarding documentation and reporting, may help promote faculty recognition for outreach and engagement.

Funding sources and funding models

Questions of funding sources and models must be considered at two levels: individual programs and institutional. In both cases, the task force strove to surface ideas for flexible, innovative funding models that would result in new non-degree credential initiatives aligned with the strategic plan; more participation by NC State academic and non-academic units in non-degree credentialing programs; and maximization of revenue sharing and return on investment to NC State (versus to external educational providers).

Individual program considerations

The task force sought to understand how current programs are funded and sustained. They interviewed or received input from 13 leaders of non-credit offerings regarding their budgets, pricing strategies, and cost management practices. These included the Ergonomic Center, Campus Enterprises, Industry Expansion Solutions, and several efforts within both Poole College and Cooperative Extension Service. Programs generally subscribed to one of three funding models (Table 5).

Table 5. Typical funding models for non-credit programs at NC State

Fully university supported	Blended support	Fully client supported
<p>The offering is free to participants, i.e. no receipts revenues come to the effort, and all direct costs are covered using state resources.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Campus Enterprises</p>	<p>This was the most common case. The client / participant is charged a fee. Grant or other non-state support may be present. Revenues are not enough to cover all direct costs.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Ergonomics Center; Extension Local Food Program; Farm to School Training Initiative</p>	<p>All direct program costs are covered by client fees.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Consumer & Community Horticulture; Pesticide Safety Education</p>

Interviewees most commonly cited the following categories as their main cost drivers and largest budget expenses.

- Personnel - leadership and administration (e.g. program directors, coordinators, managers to oversee development and operations); faculty or subject matter experts to develop and deliver content; instructional design staff; support staff (e.g. registration, program assistants)
- Marketing - advertising costs for social media, search, and email campaigns; print collateral
- Facilities/Overhead - classroom space; lab space; offices
- Supplies/Hardware - specialized tools and technologies; software required for instruction
- IT Infrastructure - learning platforms; registration systems; student databases; software integration expenses

Interviewees primarily received revenues from participant fees, whether paid by the participant, loans and aid, or employer sponsorships. They frequently mentioned other typical sources of sponsored programs including corporate partners, government contracts and grants, workforce development agencies, private foundations and nonprofits. Some also noted receiving support through private philanthropy, crowdfunding, and venture capital and investment groups.

Of course, interviewees consistently noted that they consider the costs associated with program delivery when setting program prices. In addition, several leaders mentioned awareness and consideration of the price of similar programs offered by competitors. Other factors in setting program price included

- unique value proposition of the program;
- perceived brand recognition;

- program duration and comprehensiveness; and,
- target audience willingness and ability to pay.

The proposed Community of Practice will provide a venue for faculty and staff to share insights and develop best practices regarding costs, revenues, and pricing for non-credit credentials.

Institutional considerations

Currently, there is minimal financial motivation for departments and colleges to collaborate with NCSCaLE in the creation and implementation of new non-credit programs. The absence of such collaboration increases the likelihood of content overlap and redundant efforts among departments, resulting in inefficient use of resources and a potentially perplexing environment for both students and external partners.

Revenue-sharing models that incorporate mechanisms for cost recovery and revenue distribution to academic units present opportunities for expansion and refinement. NCSCaLE has developed such a model that can be a starting point. Buy-out considerations would need to be addressed for interested faculty whose time may already be over-committed. Institutional pilots and seed funding in identified areas of opportunity can help lower the barrier of participation even more. Providing permanent budget support for centralized services like REPORTER is crucial. Such support enables academic and non-academic units to utilize essential resources such as market research, marketing and recruitment, registration tools, technology support, and badge platforms with minimal or no cost. These efforts are critical to maintaining quality, financial viability, and strategic alignment of non-degree credential initiatives. As a concrete example, the REPORTER cost to users is set for cost recovery and is reassessed on an annual basis; this model can be a hardship to existing programs and deterrent to new ones. If NC State desires to grow mission-focused non-credit opportunities in partnership with NC State faculty and staff talent, then a higher degree of institutional support must be realized.

The task force suggests considering the financial model used to grow DELTA and whether any of those approaches are applicable or transferable to grow the non-credit credential space.

Recommendation 7: The task force recommends NC State identify an institutional-level funding model that grows non-credit credential activity through revenue sharing with academic units and comprehensive institutional support for the personnel, platforms and technologies, central services, and pilots recommended herein.

Interviewees often expressed knowing, generally, that the way a NC State project ID is set-up will impact how much flexibility they will have in using program revenues. Of course, faculty and staff want the maximum amount of flexibility possible, but information about the policy

requirements, allowances, and limitations that guide project ID set-up decisions is not easily accessible to them. In response to this challenge, the task force worked closely with the University Budget Office to develop a primer on project ID set-up for non-credit instruction (Appendix K). When the recommended workflow is enacted, OIP can make foundational information like this primer easily discoverable, helping to set clear expectations with faculty and staff from the start.

Recommendation 8: The task force recommends that the Office of Instructional Programs work with the University Budget Office to identify the potential for additional flexibility in university, UNC system, or state policies regarding non-degree credential development and delivery, and to work collaboratively to affect the desired policy changes.

Marketing solutions

Preceding recommendations have focused on the foundational *internal* principles, policies, processes, tools and funding required to grow NC State’s microcredentialing efforts. The task force also recognizes the importance of asking what is needed from the perspective of our learners. NC State must clearly define and categorize its various microcredential types and promote them as viable and complementary alternatives to traditional degree paths.

Recommendation 9: The task force recommends that NC State develop the learner-centric terminologies and technological solutions necessary to ensure NC State microcredentials, and lifelong learning pathways, are easily accessible.

Learners should be able to readily access information about NC State microcredentials and navigate their options. The task force reaffirms the recommendation of the 2019 strategic planning task force, *Re-envisioning Lifelong Education and Credentialing*, to develop an “Amazon.com”-like one-stop shop for learning opportunities at NC State and with our partners. The solution envisioned goes beyond a powerful search engine to include user-targeted branding and communication strategies. Such an approach can empower learners to make informed decisions and ensure that their educational choices align seamlessly with their personal and professional aspirations. In addition to improving the accessibility and visibility of NC State programs, a robust and comprehensive one-stop solution will also underscore NC State’s dedication to evolving and adapting within the dynamic landscape of education.

Timeline and action plan

Through this report, the task force has offered high-level recommendations for the Provost's consideration. Upon acceptance of the recommendations herein, additional time and effort will be required to implement them. Through the current University Standard Budget Initiative (USBI) process, a request has already been made to support Recommendation 2, added capacity in the Office of Instructional Programs to support non-degree credential activities. Should the request be supported, the task force recommends initiating work on the following recommendations after new capacity is in place.

- Adopt guiding principles for all non-credit credentials (Recommendation 1)
- Establish new workflow for non-credit credentials (Recommendation 4)
- Explore a standard badging platform (Recommendation 6)

The following activities could be pursued near-term and with no additional financial resources

- Socialize all recommendations with university leadership groups (Cabinet, Dean's Council, etc.)
- Establish a Community of Practice (Recommendation 3)
- Explore possibilities for policy change and increased flexibility with key partners (Recommendation 8)

The following activity could be pursued near-term and with minimal financial investment


- Envision and launch pilot efforts for the non-credit to credit strategies identified (Recommendation 5)

APPENDICES



MEMORANDUM

TO: Helen Chen, Senior Vice Provost, Office of Instructional Programs
 Mark Bernhard, Vice Provost for Continuing and Lifelong Education (NCSCaLE)
 Frank Buckless, Stephen P. Zelnak Jr. Dean, Poole College of Management
 Charles Clift, Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar,
 Enrollment Management and Services
 Fashaad Crawford, Vice Provost for Assessment and Accreditation
 Dan Gerger, Director, Continuing and Professional Education (NCSCaLE)
 Pierre Gremaud, Associate Dean, Graduate School
 Deveshwar Hariharan, President, Graduate Student Association
 Peter Harries, Dean, Graduate School
 Li Marcus, Director, Undergraduate Courses, Curricula, and Academic Standards (DASA)
 Pamela McCauley, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Diversity, Equity
 And Inclusion, Wilson College of Textiles
 Donna Petherbridge, Vice Provost for Digital Education and Learning Technology
 Applications (DELTA)
 Tim Petty, Associate Vice Provost, Online and Distance Education (DELTA)
 Greg Raschke, Senior Vice Provost and Director of Libraries
 Timothy Reid, Student Body Vice President
 Bret Smith, Senior Associate Dean, University College (DASA)
 David R. Tarpy, University Faculty Scholar Professor, Department of Applied Ecology

FROM: Warwick A. Arden 
 Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

SUBJECT: Non-Degree Credentials Task Force

DATE: April 4, 2023

Pursuing non-degree credentials, such as certificates, licenses, certifications, and digital badges, offer individuals a flexible and accessible way to acquire new skills and knowledge. Additionally, non-degree credentials can enable us to respond in a timely manner to learners' needs and industry demands by providing targeted and specialized learning opportunities that supplement traditional degree programs. At NC State, many entities offer a range of non-degree credentials, which reflect the university's commitment to providing diverse and accessible pathways for learners to achieve their educational and professional goals. However, this presents challenges as it is crucial to ensure that the quality of these credentials is maintained, and learners are clear of the range of offerings.

Your work on this task force is critical in maximizing the potential of NC State in providing high-quality learning opportunities to learners. I am charging this task force with the following due by November 17, 2023:

1. Develop comprehensive definitions and terms related to non-degree credentialing for NC State that align with the university's commitment to excellence and innovation in education to articulate the quality and rigor of each type of non-degree credential NC State offers.
2. Develop recommendations for establishing policies, guidelines, and procedures for creating and issuing non-degree credentials at NC State.
3. Develop recommendations for integrating non-degree credentials into existing academic and administrative processes, including prior learning assessment, credit transfer and stackability.
4. Identify and recommend a digital platform for managing non-degree credentials creation, distribution, and verification.
5. Identify potential funding sources and recommend funding models for developing and implementing non-degree credentials.
6. Develop a timeline and action plan for implementing non-degree credentials, including recommendations for pilot programs and a phased rollout.

I expect you will need to meet biweekly during the summer and fall semesters to complete your work. Helen should submit status updates during the deliberation periods. I also welcome scheduling meetings with me if needed prior to the due date to review assumptions, approaches and recommendations. Thank you for your willingness to serve on this task force and special thanks to Dr. Helen Chen for agreeing to chair.

Appendix B - Non-degree credential task force subgroup membership and leads

Shaded cell indicates subgroup membership.

NAME	Subgroup 1: Develop recommendations for policies, guidelines, and procedures	Subgroup 2: Develop recommendations for integration with existing processes	Subgroup 3: Identify and recommend a digital platform	Subgroup 4: Identify funding sources and recommend funding models
Margaret Baker				
Mark Bernhard	LEAD			
Frank Buckless				LEAD
Charles Clift				
Dan Gerger				
Pierre Gremaud				
Deveshwar Hariharan				
Peter Harries		LEAD		
Li Marcus				
Donna Petherbridge			LEAD	
Tim Petty				
Greg Raschke				
Timothy Reid				
David Tarpy				
Ontario Wooden*				
Ying Xiong				

*Assumed Bret Smith's assignments upon appointment to Senior Associate Dean, DASA, and Smith's retirement.

Appendix C - Interviewees and contacts

NC State Faculty and Staff

Julia Abate, Executive Director, The Ergonomics Center

Vikas Anand, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Professor of Management, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Poole College of Management

Lucy Bradley, Consumer and Community Horticulture Professor and Extension Specialist, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Wayne Buhler, Professor, Department of Horticulture Science, Pesticide Safety Education Program, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Charles Clift, Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar

Jennifer Coltrane, Assistant Director, Systems Data and Reporting, University Budget Office

Hannah Dankbar, Local Food Program Manager, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Shannon Dupree, Director of Wellness, Division of Academic and Student Affairs

Maria Fister, Lead Instructional Designer, Procurement and Business Services

Dan Gerger, Director, Continuing and Professional Education, North Carolina State Continuing and Lifelong Education (NCSCaLE)

Remi Ham, Assistant Teaching Professor, and Liz Driscoll, 4-H Specialist, Farm to School Training Initiative, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Sangeeta Kapur, Accountant, University Budget Office

Tim Kelly, Assistant Director, Professional Learning and Customer Care, Industry Expansion Solutions

Sharon Loosman, Director and Chief Procurement Officer, Procurement and Business Services

Luke McHale, Assistant Budget Director, Strategic Planning and Analysis, University Budget Office

Jessica Moran, Assistant Director of Academic Programs, Jenkins Master of Accounting Program, Poole College of Management

Vilma Mueller, Associate Director for Lifelong Learning and Executive Education, Poole College of Management

Sean Munday, Assistant Dean of Business Operations, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Deanna Osmond, Professor and Department Extension Leader, Wastewater Fee-for-Service Education, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Edgar Oviedo-Rondón, Professor / Extension Specialist, Poultry Extension Programs, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Danesha Seth Carley, Director, Center of Excellence in Regulatory Science in Agriculture (CERSA), College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Melissa Sharp, Associate Director, Zeis Textiles Extension, Wilson College of Textiles

Scott Showalter, Director of Master of Accounting Program and Professor of Practice in Accounting, Poole College of Management

Annaka Sikkink, Employee Development and Engagement Coordinator, Campus Enterprises

Bailey Smith, Extension Coordinator, Zeis Textiles Extension, Wilson College of Textiles

Bethany Smith, Director of Digital Learning, Digital Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA)

Jessie Sova, Assistant Vice Provost for Business Operations, Digital Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA) and North Carolina State Continuing and Lifelong Education (NCSCaLE)

Clint Stevenson, Associate Professor and Distance Education Coordinator, Department of Food Bioprocessing and Nutrition Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

David Stokes, Teaching Coordinator, Data Science Academy

David Tarpy, Professor and Extension Apiculturist, Applied Ecology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Brian Vigna, Instructional Designer and Security Awareness Training Specialist, Industry Expansion Solutions

Andre West, Director, Zeis Textiles Extension, Wilson College of Textiles

Jessica White, Lead Instructional Designer, Department of Food, Bioprocessing and Nutrition Sciences and Digital Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA)

Bethanne Winzeler, Assistant Director of Course Quality, Digital Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA)

Participants in the October 31, 2023 stakeholder session and not listed above:

Kimberly Allen, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Scott Despain, Associate Department Head, Foreign Languages and Literatures

David Howard, Director, Academic Technology, DELTA

Sharon Joines, Associate Dean, College of Design

John Lee, Associate Dean, College of Education

Carol Ann Lewald, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Alun Lloyd, Associate Dean, College of Sciences

Eric Money, Associate Director, NC State Center for Geospatial Analytics

David Parish, Assistant Dean, College of Engineering

Matt Peterson, Director of Federal Relations

Janice Sitzes, Director, Continuing and Professional Education, College of Natural Resources

Greg Tourino, co-chair, Faculty Senate Academic Policy Subcommittee

Other universities

Anne Reed, Director, Office of Micro-credentials, SUNY Buffalo (via Zoom, September 13, 2023)

Eliana Guzman, Associate Director, Innovative Education and Student Success, Florida International University (via Zoom, October 16, 2023)

Web-based examination of example initiatives, including

- [Louisiana State University](#) - Course credit for professional certifications
- [University of Arizona](#) - Age of Empires initiative
- [University of Texas System](#) - Google career certificates through Coursera
- [NC State University](#) - credit for military experience
- [Purdue University](#) - IT certifications / examinations approved for transfer
- [Iowa University](#) - American Council on Education (ACE) Credit Policy
- [Rutgers University](#) - Mini MBA programs

Appendix D - Definition drafts

Minors offer students enrolled in a degree program *knowledge in another discipline outside of their primary discipline or program of study*. Minors may be flexible and broad in nature or provide a foundation of knowledge with a further area of specialization.

Concentrations offer students enrolled in a degree program the opportunity to *specialize in an area within their primary discipline or program of study*. Because concentrations represent depth of knowledge and skills, they may be appropriate to repackage as separate undergraduate or graduate certificate offerings or specialized skill pathways.

For-credit certificates offer learners - who may or may not be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program - with *specific skills that may be drawn from specific industry, disciplinary, or social need*.

Post-baccalaureate certificates offer learners with undergraduate degrees *specific skills that may be drawn from specific industry, disciplinary, or social need*. The curriculum consists only of undergraduate permanent coursework and is designed for (1) students pursuing specialization or further experience in the discipline of their held degree, (2) students holding a degree who are seeking entrance into a master's program, or (3) students who hold a degree in one discipline, but are changing fields.

Professional certificates offer learners - who may or may not be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program - with a *collection of basic, intermediate, or advanced skills* that may reasonably result in entry-level employment in a field (foundations certificate), advancement beyond entry-level in a field (intermediate certificate), or leadership or specialized roles for mid-level employees in a field (advanced certificate).

Professional badges offer learners - who may or may not be

enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program - the opportunity to build *foundational, intermediate, or advanced knowledge and skills of demonstrable employer value*.

Personal enrichment offerings offer learners - who may or may not be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program - the opportunity to *grow knowledge, skills and abilities of interest* to them.

Micro-Credential Proposal Form

A credit-bearing micro-credential is an academic program that may “stack into” a larger certificate or degree program. A non-credit bearing micro-credential is a program that recognizes achievement in co-curricular experiences or continuing/professional development opportunities. All proposed micro-credentials, to be recognized as “university-approved” programs, require the same campus-level departmental/decanal approval process as traditional degree programs. Student who earn a credit-bearing micro-credential will receive a notation on their transcript, in recognition of the achievement, and will also be awarded a digital badge upon completion. Non-credit programs result in a digital badge but no transcript notation.

Approval Process: Respond to all questions below and submit this form and any supplementary materials to micro@buffalo.edu. Your proposal will be reviewed by the Micro-Credential Review Committee within three weeks.

Section 1. General Information		
a) Information about the Micro-Credential Being Proposed	Date:	
	Title of Micro-Credential:	
	Number of Minimum Required Credits: (Credit-based micro-credentials only)	
b) Department or Unit		
c) Contact	Name/Title: _____	
	Telephone: _____ Email: _____	

Section 2. Program Description

a) Provide a brief description of this proposed micro-credential.

b) Describe the reason for proposing this micro-credential. What is the purpose that it will serve for your department/unit?

- c) Identify the broad category (NACE competency) for your proposed micro-credential ([category definitions can be found here](#)). Select all that apply. These categories will be used to help students search for the programs that are relevant to their goals.

Critical Thinking

Communication

Equity and Inclusion

Leadership

Teamwork

Technology

Professionalism

Career and Self-Development

- d) Will this micro-credential consist of a series of digital badges? Yes No

If yes, how many?

- e) What are the educational and career objectives of the badging opportunity?

- f) Program Information

Level:

Undergraduate

Graduate

Undergraduate and Graduate

Professional Program

Continuing Ed/Professional Development

Who is Eligible:

UB Students Only

Both UB and Non-UB Students

Non-UB students Only

UB Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

Credit Options:

For Credit

Not For Credit

Instruction Method:

In Person

Hybrid

Online

Time to Completion

Less than one semester

One semester

Two semesters

Three semesters

More than Three semesters

- g) Who is the intended audience for the program?

h) What are the admission requirements or eligibility criteria for students in this program (i.e., GPA, course prerequisites, or necessary experience or skills)? Also, provide a description of how these requirements are intended to assure that students are prepared to complete the program.

i) Describe how this micro-credential adds value to currently existing programs or activities. Which current university programs or activities does it serve or complement? Are the requirements for this micro-credential currently part of existing degree requirements?

j) Is this program designed to meet specialized external accreditation standards or professional licensure requirements?

Yes

N/A

If yes, please append at the end of this proposal a side-by-side chart to show how the program's components meet those external standards, and provide verification from the academic unit that oversees this area.

Section 3. Academic and Other Support Services

a) Summarize academic advising, support services and any departments or units collaborating efforts that will be available to help students succeed in the program.

b) Include letters of support from any department that offers required courses or activities that are outside of the department administering the program, to verify that courses and activities will be offered regularly and that seats are available for students seeking the micro-credential.

Section 4. Financial and Administrative Resources

a) Outline the resource plan for ensuring the success of the proposed program over time.

b) Is there intention to charge [a program fee](#)? (Note: All fees are subject to the university student program fee approval process.)

Yes, the fee has been approved

No

Yes, the fee has not been approved

If yes, what is the amount?

c) Identify the administrative contact person that will be responsible for adding program information to your unit's webpages.

Name:

Email Address:

d) Identify the contact person that will be responsible providing enrollment information to the Office of Micro-Credentials.

Name:

Email Address:

Section 5. Approval

Micro-credentials become effective when approved by the appropriate authority and upon notice by the appropriate vice provost for undergraduate or graduate education.

Micro-credentials must undergo regular assessment of student learning outcomes and assurance of academic rigor, similar to guidelines that guide regular university activities. A department must guarantee that all required courses for the micro-credential will be available within every two-year period so that students can complete their programs in a timely manner.

Campus Level Approval	<i>Chair/Director:</i>		
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
	<i>Dean/Unit Head:</i>		
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

Please forward completed proposals to micro@buffalo.edu

If approved, your proposal will be forwarded to either the dean of undergraduate education or the dean of the Graduate School for signature and final approval.

Dean UGE or Dean Grad:

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

Section 6. Attachments

The Digital Badge Overview form is required for all proposals. Please submit one form for each badge.

Additionally, please submit any attachments that provide additional information about your program. Examples of attachments include syllabi of required courses, directions for major assignments and grading rubrics.

All documents should be submitted to micro@buffalo.edu. The Office of Micro-Credentials will confirm receipt of your submission within 48 hours.

Social Media Management Certificate Program

A Hands-On Design Thinking Program for Creative and Non-Creative Professionals

Duration: 8 Weeks

Dates: Monday, October 1, 2023 – Monday, November 20, 2023

Hours: Every Monday from 5 to 9 pm

Tuition: \$TBD

NC State's Social Media Management Certificate Program is designed to show you how to develop and manage an effective social media program. You will follow a nine-step program to complete a full social media proposal and program for a business or nonprofit you wish to support. You will also learn about social media tools and strategies, content creation and management, and project and risk management. You will receive extensive online resources and document templates, access to a closed online community for participants, and an hour of consulting with each instructor. Our goal is to spend 8 weeks leading you to think and work like a social media professional and to become confident in solving marketing problems on social media platforms.

Our Program

Through the introduction of the nine-step social media marketing process—inventory, discovery, hypothesis, audit, and planning, including metrics, reporting, and quality—and experience creating a solution via a hands-on marketing project, our goal is to provide you with a well-rounded education in social media marketing that will foster career growth and creativity. Gain a portfolio-building design project and a clear understanding of marketing principles and processes that will enable you to either begin creating or continue developing your marketing activities and portfolio after you complete the program.

This certificate is tailored for marketing professionals and non-professionals alike who are looking to either advance their careers or who are shifting focus. Marketing professionals may be introduced to methods that you may not be familiar with. For non-creative professionals, the crash course in marketing methodologies can be applied to career paths that have not traditionally included marketing responsibilities.

This is a Synchronous and Collaborative Remote Experiential Learning™ (SCREL™) certificate. Unlike traditional distance and online learning models, SCREL enables real-time interactions between students, faculty, and industry professionals. In addition, our intimate maximum class size of 18 students will enable in-depth discussions and exchange of ideas to maximize your learning experience and results.

Requirements

- Social media accounts on the major platforms used in your industry
- High-speed internet connection
- Built-in or external webcam and speakers
- Laptop or desktop computer running the latest browser and streaming media

- Real-time participation and presence during the class

What You Will Learn

- Social media overview and perspectives
- Initial inventory: gathering intelligence
- Discovery: what does your client think / want / know
- 360 Audit: what is happening in the client landscape
- Planning, policy, and proposing: defining the work
- Understanding the social media platform options
- Creating relevant content on an ongoing basis; using a content calendar
- Metrics and reporting results
- Beyond "free:" paid marketing on the social platforms
- Issues in social media management: ownership, responsibility, intellectual property, more
- Best practices: tools, automation, workflow, systems
- Using AI in social media marketing
- Visual branding for social media marketing
- Marketing your social media management practice

Meet your Instructors

Martin Brossman

Brossman & Associates

I am committed to economic growth from the ground up through small and micro-businesses.

I am a success coach, speaker, trainer, and author incorporating social media training to accelerate growth for entrepreneurs and small businesses. I have originated in-person and online networking groups, facilitating valuable business connections among members.

Karen Tiede

Red Tuxedo

Karen Tiede is a social media marketing consultant/trainer and textile artist who has successfully applied social media to market her work and provides social media management services to clients. Karen brings 15+ years of corporate process design and improvement experience to her work with professional, academic, and small business consulting.

Appendix G - OLLI Course Evaluation template

(Adapted from a Google form, November 13, 2023)

Section I: Evaluation of the Instructor

Please rate the instructor on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Knowledge of the subject
Clarity and method of presentation
Preparation and organization
Overall rating

Section II: Evaluation of the Course

Please rate the course on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Level of intellectual stimulation
Degree to which content matched course description
Overall rating of course

Do you have any additional comments about this course? [Open text field]

Section III: Impact of OLLI

How would you rate your overall OLLI experience (Not just this course)

Do you have any comments about your overall OLLI experience? [Open text field]

x.x Stacking Credentials

Under certain prescribed instances, as defined below, master's programs may be able to double-count the coursework from two certificates towards fulfilling the degree requirements. In general, the requirement that 18 hours be unique to a master's program precludes this approach, and this exception would allow more hours to be shared for a specific program.

A. Requirements:

- This 'stacking' can only be used for increasing the shared credit between two certificates and a specific master's program; 18 hours of unique credits remains in place for all students seeking multiple master's degrees.
- Triple counting is not allowed so courses can only be shared between a master's program and one certificate; a course cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of two certificates and a master's degree
- The courses used from certificates to complete a master's degree must directly align with the course requirements for that specific program. The degree requirements cannot be met by completing two random certificates and requesting that their courses be used to complete a significant portion of a master's degree.
- For certificates to be stacked, programs must submit a request to the Graduate School outlining the specifics of the certificates to be used and how they map onto the curriculum of an existing master's degree. This proposal must be approved by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School as a final step in the process.

B. Application

- Following Administrative Board approval, students either enrolled in the program or those who have enrolled in multiple, appropriate certificates will be eligible to 'stack' credentials provided they fulfill the degree and certificate requirements.
- Students who are taking certificates and then are interested in taking the additional credits to complete the relevant master's, must apply for the master's program prior to completing the second certificate. It should be noted that success in courses taken as a certificate student does not guarantee admission into a master's program.

NC State Digital Badges Format

Digital badges identify credentials such as certifications, specialized training, and program and seminar completion. Properly applied, they can quickly and effectively signal expertise on web pages, LinkedIn profiles, email signatures and the like.

A consistent digital badging format is essential to communicating authenticity and context within our globally recognized brand. This formatting guide shows how to modify the digital badge to suit user needs, while staying within NC State's brand guidelines.

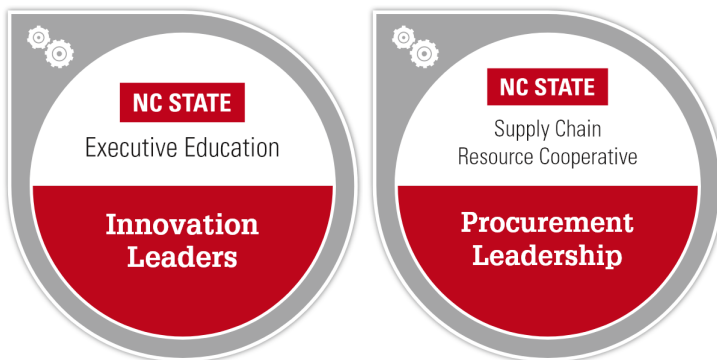
Note: These guidelines apply to not-for-credit credentials. For credited programs, please follow faculty governance rules.

Digital badging certifications should:

- > Use the NC STATE 2x1 brick logo to provide global brand awareness.
- > Identify the college, department or division that manages the program to provide context.
- > Use icons, color bands and concise program names to identify the certification.
- > Allow options for identifying partners, clients and customized programs.

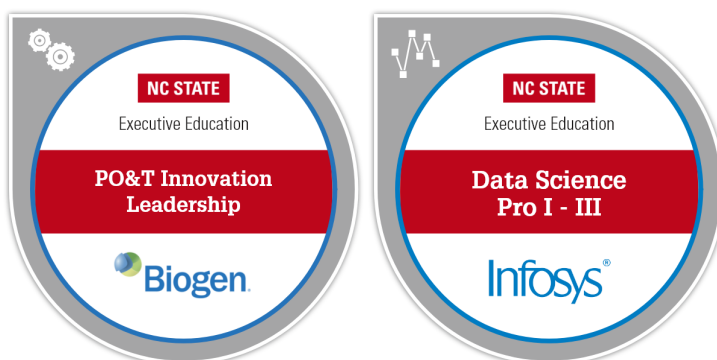
The following formats should be used:

Core Internal Digital Badge



- > Red 2x1 brick logo with unit name (black Univers font) in white upper section.
- > Course/seminar/program (white Glypha font) in red lower section.
- > Gray outer ring for basic certification badges.
- > White icon in upper left corner to add context.

Co-Branded Digital Badge



- > Red 2x1 brick logo and unit name (black Univers font) in white upper section.
- > Course/seminar/program (white Glypha font) in center red section.
- > Partner name and/or hi-res logo in lower white section.
- > Color-coded outer ring for additional badges.
- > White icon in upper left corner to add context.

Tiered Programs (shown here in co-branded format)

Apply all previous formatting rules, plus:

Level 1 (or single program level) = gray

Level 3 = green

Level 2 = yellow

Level 4 = black

These colors come from the NC State brand's secondary color palette and are inspired by the Six Sigma belt system.*



*Developed by Motorola in the 1980's, Six Sigma is a business methodology designed to increase efficiency through a disciplined, data-driven approach. Participants often undergo a certification process to achieve "belt levels" indicating their command of Six Sigma methods.

Exceptions to the Co-Branding Badge Format

Please work with the Office of Strategic Brand Management on approval when:

- > NC State is one of a group of institutions working with an outside entity.
- > The badge is used internally by the partner.
- > The entity has developed their own badges.



Note: Brick logo and college/division/department should be included.

Project ID set-up for non-credit instruction: A primer

The purpose of this primer is to equip NC State faculty and staff with basic information about two project ID types most often used to collect participant fees for non-credit programs and credentials.

This primer addresses typical cases but not all cases. In all situations, faculty and staff who develop and run such programs must work with their unit budget officer to discuss the nuances of their non-credit program and project ID chartfield request. Additional details beyond the key points in this document can be found in the [Trust Fund Guidelines](#) (TFG) on the Budget Office [Trust Fund Overview](#) webpage.

State vs. Trust Project IDs

Activities surrounding non-credit programs and credentials (e.g. badges, certificates) often meet one of the two following program codes, as defined in the [UNC system chart of accounts](#):

- 103 Non-Credit and Receipts-Supported Instruction (also referred to as “Extension instruction”) - Instruction for which degree credit is not granted, for adult education, continuing education and/or professional education courses, conferences, seminars, workshops or similar offerings.
- 142 Community Service - Educational services made available to the general public, for advising, consulting, information services and similar sharing of institutional capabilities, expertise, and resources.

Programs meeting either of the definitions above generally require the establishment of a lower-ledger 3 (LL3) state appropriated receipts project ID in the general fund (see [TFG](#) page 34, memo #131). LL3 projects can only expend receipts they earn in a fiscal year, and they do not allow the carry forward of cash balances at year end except for pre-collected receipts. Pre-collected receipts are receipts collected in a fiscal year for services or programs to be delivered in the next fiscal year (e.g. workshops, summer camps). The pre-collected receipts / unearned revenues are carried forward into the next fiscal year to pay for the corresponding expenditures incurred the next fiscal year.

Upper-ledger 3 (UL3) projects, or trust funds, are less frequently established for non-credit programs. UL3 projects must be 100% self-supporting (i.e. revenues pay for all direct costs including personnel and operating expenses), must not be supported by a state subsidy, and must continuously maintain a positive cash balance (see [TFG](#) page 7, “the activity must be self-supporting”). UL3 projects are allowed to carry forward fund balances at year end. Programs that do not meet these trust fund requirements are accounted for in an LL3 state appropriated receipt project (see [TFG](#) page 23, “TF-A-8”).

Occasionally, a non-credit program’s purpose does not clearly align with either the 103 or 142 program codes above (and hence the general rule to establish a LL3 project ID). The Budget

Office has allowed establishment of UL3 trust funds in the following exceptional cases; these programs are still expected to be 100% self-supporting, as is required for all UL3 projects:

- 1) non-adult (K-12) programs which are considered to be outside of NCSU's primary mission, and,
- 2) programs designed for specific organizations which are considered to be outside of program 142 ("educational services made available to the general public").

Table 1 gives a comparison of LL3 and UL3 project IDs.

Table 1. Lower-ledger 3 (LL3) and upper-ledger 3 (UL3) project ID comparison

	Lower-ledger 3	Upper-ledger 3
Project ID type	State appropriated receipts	Trust fund
Total direct costs*	LL3 projects may be supported by a state subsidy	UL3 projects must be 100% self supporting (cover all direct costs of personnel and operating expenses) and may not be supported by a state subsidy
Cash balance and fiscal year end carry forward	Can only spend receipts earned during the fiscal year. Cannot carry forward cash balance at year end (except pre-collected receipts)	Must maintain a positive cash balance at all times. Can carry forward cash balance at year end.
Allowable expenses	Per the expenses defined in the project set-up request, and NCSU spending guidelines for state funds	Per the expenses defined in the trust fund authority, and NCSU spending guidelines for trust funds
Annual administrative service charge (4%)	Is not charged to LL3 project IDs	Is charged to UL3 project IDs

*Direct costs include program personnel, marketing, space rental, supplies and materials, and travel.

Maximizing flexible use of funds

The best way to maximize use of receipt funds is to write an appropriately detailed yet flexible project ID set-up chartfield request for your LL3 or UL3 project, in cooperation with your unit budget officer.

- Write a clear and detailed justification explaining the purpose of the project, source of revenue, and proposed expenditures.
- For UL3 trust funds, attach a Form BA-108/109 (located on the Budget Office [Trust Fund Overview](#) webpage), and include all applicable direct costs (personnel and operating) in the revenue and expense projection.

- Consider including a statement that receipts can be used to support program development.

Example of an UL3 trust fund authority letter, purpose section:

“Revenues in this project will be from approved contracts between [NC State unit] and corporations for customized training. [NC State unit] will create a separate project ID phase for each contract to maintain a separation of revenues and expenses. Funds will be used to pay salaries, benefits, contract services, travel, supplies and materials. Food may be included for training participants if it is part of the program training fees and disclosed to the participants at the time of course and budget development. To be maintained as a trust fund, this project must be fully self-supporting with no state funds allowed for this activity.”

Last updated by OIP and UBO: 11/06/2023