Saskatchewan's Guide to Micro-Credentials

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Micro-credentials are short programs that focus on specific knowledge, skills and/or competencies that address specific needs in Saskatchewan's labour market. *Saskatchewan's Growth Plan: The Next Decade of Growth 2020-2030* identifies micro-credentials as an opportunity to advance post-secondary education and labour market priorities. Micro-credentials provide space for post-secondary institutions and employer/industry partners to come together and develop innovative programming that can address the needs of Saskatchewan's growing economy.

Saskatchewan's Guide to Micro-credentials is a tool for learners, post-secondary institutions, employers and industry groups to understand their relationship to micro-credentials and how to engage meaningfully in the emerging micro-credential environment.

For learners, micro-credentials provide an opportunity to upskill or reskill in a matter of weeks or months instead of having to enroll in longer programs.

Post-secondary institutions can use micro-credentials to provide learners with new and relevant skills, reach a new demographic of learners and generate revenue in new ways.

Micro-credentials help employers address their workforce needs in a rapidly changing labour market by providing opportunities to hire new, and/or upskill existing employees with the competencies required.

This guide is separated into three parts:

- **Part 1: Micro-credential Stakeholders** addresses the four major stakeholder groups, offers a brief breakdown of how the guide supports their understanding of micro-credentials and provides insight into future considerations.
- **Part 2: Elements of a Micro-credential** addresses the key elements, clarifying what micro-credentials are, how they work and who is involved in offering them.
- **Part 3: A Model for Developing and Issuing Micro-credentials** provides a model for the development of micro-credentials with a description of the categories of information post-secondary institutions and issuing bodies may want to consider integrating into their credentials.

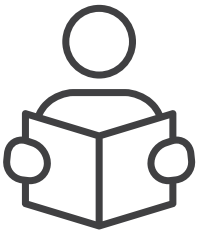
Part 1: Micro-credential Stakeholders

Each stakeholder group approaches micro-credentials with a unique perspective. This guide considers the challenges in understanding what micro-credentials are, and their benefit to learners, post-secondary education institutions, employers/industry groups and government.

The below graphic outlines how micro-credentials relate to each stakeholder by suggesting what micro-credentials mean to them, how the guide can provide support, and areas for further consideration as micro-credentials become more prominent in the post-secondary education landscape.

Learners

Micro-credentials offer learners an opportunity to upskill or reskill through short, knowledge, competency and/or skills-based programming that directly connects to the labour market.



The guide can help learners understand what micro-credentials are (terminology) and how they are connected to the labour market and their lifelong learning.

As micro-credential work evolves, learners will be looking to institutions to demonstrate how micro-credentials connect to other credentialed programming and how micro-credentials relate to, or integrate with, lifelong learning and learner pathways.

Post-Secondary Education Institutions

Micro-credentials are an opportunity for post-secondary education institutions to:

- provide learners with skills and competencies relevant to the labour market;
- encourage lifelong learning in new and innovative ways;
- promote post-secondary education programming to new demographics of learners; and,
- develop new avenues for revenue generation.

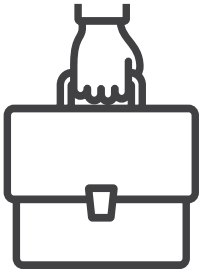
The guide can provide post-secondary institutions with:

- a common foundation for understanding micro-credentials;
- a blueprint for developing and implementing new programming;
- a starting point for integrating micro-credentials with traditional programming;
- an understanding of the importance of collaborating with employers on developing micro-credential; and,
- ideas around collaborating with other institutions when developing micro-credentials.

This guide will also help institutions ensure their approaches to micro-credentials align with pan-Canadian and international best practices.

Employers and Industry Groups

Micro-credentials provide employers and industry groups with opportunities to hire new, and upskill existing employees with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in a rapidly-changing labour market.



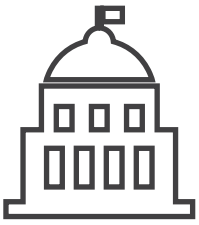
The guide can provide employers and industry groups with:

- a basic explanation of micro credential programming;
- a starting point for understanding how micro-credentials can meet their training needs; and,
- an awareness of the importance of collaboration between education institutions and employer/industry groups in the development of micro-credentials.

Employers and industry groups may consider how their specific labour market needs can be addressed through micro-credential programming and how they can form partnerships with post-secondary education institutions to take on a more active role in shaping micro-credential programming.

Government

Micro-credentials provide government with an opportunity to address broad labour market needs in a responsive and innovative way.



The guide establishes a more consistent approach to micro-credentials by:

- supporting post-secondary education institutions, employers and learners in understanding micro credential programming; and,
- serving as a framework for encouraging micro credential development that advances government's provincial labour market priorities.

As this work evolves, government can help to ensure that the guide promotes a consistent approach to micro-credentials within Saskatchewan that aligns with other provincial and international approaches.

Part 2: Elements of a Micro-credential

Micro-credential Definition

In Saskatchewan, micro-credentials are recognized as short, knowledge, skills and/or competency-based programming that should have clear, articulated assessments and demonstrated connections to the labour market and lifelong learning.

The table below identifies how the elements of a micro-credential impact learners, post-secondary education institutions, and employer/industry groups.

Learners

- Identifies what the credential means to the learner.
- Explains how micro credentials relate to potential employers.
- Describes ways the credential can be used/ shared.

Post-Secondary Education Institutions

- Provides elements for consideration in the development of micro- credentials.
- Highlights the intersection and involvement of the learner and employer/ industry groups.
- Highlights the importance of collaboration with employers and industry groups.

Employers and Industry Groups

- Explains how micro-credentials address current and future needs in the labour market.
- Describes the involvement of employer and industry groups in developing micro credential programming.
- Highlights the importance of collaboration with post-secondary education institutions to meet training needs.

Micro-credential Principles

The following principles offer additional insight on the specific qualities important to understanding micro-credentials in the province.

Competencies/Skills:

Micro-credentials focus on knowledge, skills and/or competencies related to the labour market and lifelong learning.

Quality:

Micro-credentials are based on the achievement of specific outcomes (the knowledge, skills and/or competencies addressed in the program) that are developed collaboratively between post-secondary

education institutions and employer/industry groups when possible. These outcomes are directly related to the knowledge, skills and/or competencies required by those active in the labour market.

Assessment:

Micro-credentials are fully verifiable credentials that clearly articulate the relevant assessment(s) the credential earner has completed.

Credential Stewardship:

Traditional credentials are typically awarded to the learner with recognition (via a parchment or document), with the awarding institution retaining control of the credential (within the institution's registrar's office). For micro-credentials, issuing institutions maintain stewardship of the credential (e.g. expiration dates of credentials), and retain the ability to revoke credentials in situations where it is warranted (e.g. academic dishonesty).

Sharing:

Micro-credentials should be developed in such a way that learners and employers are able to share and view the necessary elements that ensure the credential meets specified standards and that these standards have been attained by the learner.

Many credential issuers are leveraging digital platforms for the creation and issuance of digital credentials (often described as badges) as a tool for awarding micro-credentials to learners.

Collaborative Development:

Micro-credentials should be developed collaboratively between post-secondary education institutions and employer/industry members. Collaborative development will ensure that learners have access to quality programming with clear connections to the labour market.

Primary Issuer:

Micro-credentials are offered by post-secondary education institutions, employers, agencies or organizations. Issuing institutions or organizations have a history of operations in Saskatchewan or another recognized jurisdiction.

Pathways:

Micro-credentials may link or lead to further education/training programs, offering learners the opportunity to ladder into additional programs or stack different micro-credentials together.

Transcripts:

Micro-credentials should support and complement traditional transcripts, articulating the skills and competencies acquired by learners as an integrated record of learning.

Credit/Non-credit:

Micro-credentials can include both credit and non-credit approaches to programming. In the case of credit programming, micro-credentials must be issued in accordance with both institutional guidelines and provincial legislation.

Part 3: A Model for Developing and Issuing Micro-credentials

In support of the development and issuance of micro-credentials, the following model articulates information categories post-secondary education institutions and issuing bodies may want to consider integrating into their digital credential. This information can be included in the micro-credential's metadata (information embedded within the digital credential).

Earner	The name of the individual who earned the credential, date issued and date of expiration (if applicable).
Issuing Body	The name of the institution/organization (including any logo or recognizable branding) that provided the programming.
Partner Endorsement	The name of any institutions/organizations that have collaborated on/ endorsed the credential (including any logo or recognizable branding).
Other Partners	The name of any other organizations or institutions that have participated in the development or offering of the credential (including any logo or recognizable branding).
Outcomes	Articulation of the outcomes achieved through this credential. This section should briefly describe what the earner is able to do (or understands/has knowledge of) as a result of completing the credential.
Competencies and Skills	Specific name of the competency or skill achieved through the completion of the credential. This section may also be integrated with the outcomes section.
Assessment	Description of the assessment(s) involved in awarding this credential.
Additional Criteria	Any additional information that might be beneficial to someone reviewing the credential (e.g. if the credential is a component of a larger program, credential is non-credit/for-credit, how the credential relates to additional programming (stacking/laddering), etc.)