NONCREDIT MOBILITY ACADEMY
Enhancing Data and Policy Infrastructure for Better Economic Mobility

CALL FOR STATE TEAMS

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) is pleased to announce the launch of a new state policy academy. A two-year initiative developed in partnership with the Education Strategy Group (ESG) and Opportunity America (OA), the academy will support states as they build capacity to better realize the potential of noncredit education and increase economic mobility for learners who begin their postsecondary journey through noncredit programming. The number of states selected to participate in the Academy will depend on available funding.

Technological change is transforming the workplace and with it, Americans' need for postsecondary education, skills training, and workforce preparation. Postsecondary noncredit education divisions are among the entities best positioned to deliver this instruction, providing opportunities for learners and enhancing state economic competitiveness. Yet, the value of noncredit education is not always clear to states or students, nor are there clear pathways established from these learning opportunities to longer-term, credit-bearing coursework. The Noncredit Mobility Academy will support states as they develop a vision for noncredit workforce education and how noncredit training can serve as a starting point and an accelerator on a pathway to completing a credit-bearing credential or degree.

This Academy seeks to fill a gap in the field as neither the federal government nor states collect adequate data on noncredit education, hindering their ability to serve students and improve the quality of noncredit educational offerings. Few states fund noncredit education on par with credit-bearing instruction, and fewer still do enough to encourage or support learners who seek to transition from noncredit programs to credit-bearing credentials and degrees.

The Noncredit Mobility Academy is recruiting participants from states committed to improving the quality of their career-centered noncredit education and providing learners accelerated pathways to degrees, and, ultimately, economic mobility.

Each state will choose one of four goals to pursue during the two-year academy:
- Developing a state-level taxonomy for noncredit programs that aligns with state definitions for quality higher education.
- Formulating a plan to build or improve upon noncredit data collection and reporting.
- Crafting a set of funding recommendations to support or incentivize noncredit pathways.
- Developing a communication plan to inform state constituencies and prospective learners about noncredit learning experiences.

States will be asked to select working teams representing the SHEEO agency, the state workforce system, and institutions that offer career-centered noncredit education. These teams will attend instructional convenings and work closely with coaches providing technical assistance.

Each state will also be asked to recruit a steering committee—which may include the SHEEO, the chief executive officer of the state workforce agency, a gubernatorial policy advisor, legislators, and college presidents—to support the working team and ensure that learnings from the academy are reflected in future state policy.

Members of the state working teams will be expected to participate in two in-person and one virtual formal convenings, and other informal virtual meetings as needed. The project will cover the cost of the working teams' travel to in-person convenings. They will also be asked to prepare a pre-project self-assessment, meet monthly with coaches, host at least one site visit, and complete a survey at the conclusion of the project. Work will begin in late 2023 and conclude in early fall of 2025.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

States interested in participating in the academy should submit letters of interest by Friday, November 3, 2023. Letters should address the following questions:

1. What is the state's vision for noncredit postsecondary workforce education and its ability to align with credit-bearing credentials and degree programs? What has been achieved to date to advance that vision? What enabling conditions, relevant public policy, or practices at institutions are guiding this vision? How sustainable is the state's political commitment to this issue?
2. How far, if at all, has your state come along each of the four paths identified by the project as key steps in elevating noncredit education?
   - Developing a state-level taxonomy of noncredit programs.
   - Improving noncredit data collection.
   - Advancing policy on noncredit funding.
   - Informing policymakers and the public about the value of noncredit education.
3. What is the state's most pressing need as it moves forward to achieve its vision for noncredit education, increasing mobility for learners, and providing a pathway to credit-bearing education and training?
4. What are the names, titles, and organizational affiliations of 10 likely project participants from the state (five likely members of the state steering committee and five likely members of the state working team)?

Letters of interest should be three to five pages in length and should clearly identify how the goals of the policy academy align with the state's current or future activities.

SHEEO and its partnering organizations will use information from the letters to select states to participate in the academy. Selected states will be notified in early December.

Letters of interest should be addressed to Dr. Christina Whitfield, SHEEO senior vice president and chief of staff, and emailed to Gloria Auer at gauer@sheeo.org by the November 3 deadline.