

2026

First Credential Master List User Guide

Understanding Credentials, Scores, and Tiers



What is the First Credential Master List?

The **First Credential Master List** is a resource for Local Education Agency (LEA) leaders and counselors to identify credentials that are currently offered or could be offered within their LEA. It brings together information about career clusters, occupations, wages, and credential evaluation to help LEAs understand the value of different credential opportunities and support students in planning toward credential attainment.



About This Guide

The Master List contains a lot of information about each credential. This guide is designed to help you understand and use that information. It explains how the list is organized, what key terms and scores mean, how credentials are evaluated and assigned a Tier, and how to interpret individual credential entries.

The evaluations and Tier designations shown in the Master List have already been determined. You do not need to calculate ratings, scores, or Tiers. This guide explains the evaluation process to provide context for how those results were determined and how to interpret them.

Understanding the Language

As you explore the First Credential Master List, you'll see several terms used to describe how credentials are organized and evaluated. Understanding these terms will make it easier to navigate the list and interpret the information provided.



1. Route

What it tells you:

The way a credential is offered or earned.

How to use it:

Start by choosing the route that matches the type of credential you're looking for.

The Master List is organized into five separate route tabs:

- Apprenticeship
- Concurrent Enrollment
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Industry
- Technical College



2. Career Cluster

What it tells you:

The broad career area associated with the credential.

How to use it:

Within the route you selected, use the career cluster to narrow your search to the area of work you're exploring.

Examples may include:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Digital technology
- Healthcare and Human Services
- Business, Finance, Marketing



3. Credential

What it tells you:

The specific qualification a student can earn.

How to use it:

Once you've identified a career cluster, explore the credentials associated with that area.

Examples may include:

- Cybersecurity CTE Completer
- Certified Nursing Assistant
- AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner
- Welding Certificate



4. Occupation

What it tells you:

The specific job or work associated with a credential.

How to use it:

Use the occupation information to understand the kinds of work the credential may support and to examine related wage and workforce information.

Examples may include:

- Teacher
- Electrician
- Medical Assistant
- Welder
- Accountant
- Software Developer
- Automotive Technician

Additional Key Terms

- **Economic Threshold**

Measures the economic and workforce value of a credential, including factors such as wages, job demand, employer validation, and opportunities across industries and occupations.

- **Learner Readiness**

Measures how attainable a credential is for students and whether it supports continued education, training, or employment.

- **Rating**

A value from 0–3 showing how well a credential meets an individual evaluation criterion. Higher ratings indicate stronger alignment with that criterion.

- **Score**

The total points earned across the evaluation criteria. The overall score is used to determine the credential's Tier.

- **Tier**

A designation that helps LEAs prioritize credentials based on their overall evaluation. Tier 1 credentials generally receive the highest priority, but all credentials included on the Master List are worthwhile options.

- **Stackability**

Describes whether a credential provides clear next steps into additional credentials, education, training, apprenticeships, or employment opportunities.

- **Employer Validation**

Indicates the extent to which employers have been involved in developing, updating, recognizing, or hiring individuals with the credential.

How the Master List Works

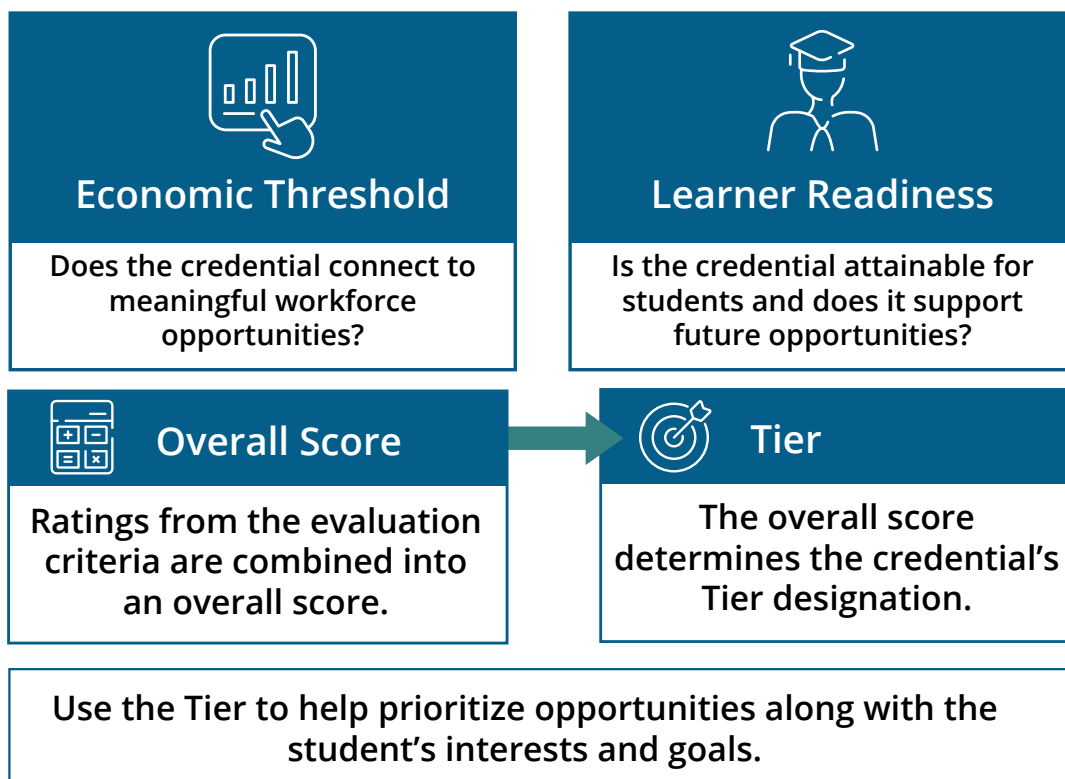
The First Credential Master List helps LEA leaders and counselors explore credential opportunities and use supporting data to help prioritize options. Follow the steps below to move from a student's interests to specific credentials and the occupations they support.



Use the evaluation results to understand and prioritize opportunities for the student.

Understand and Prioritize

Once you've identified a **Credential** and the **Occupations** it supports, review the evaluation information provided in the Master List to better understand its value and help prioritize opportunities. Each credential has been evaluated using two groups of criteria: Economic Threshold and Learner Readiness. Those ratings are combined into an overall score, which determines the credential's Tier.



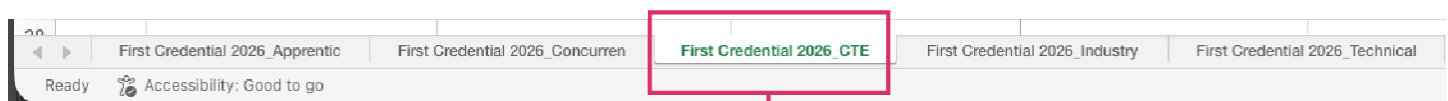
How to Read the Master List

Now that you understand how the Master List is organized and how credentials have been evaluated, let's look at how that information appears in the Master List. The example below shows how the different data points work together to provide a more complete picture of a credential.

Start by choosing a route.

The Master List is organized into tabs by route. Select the route that matches the credential opportunity you are exploring, then use the career cluster and credential information within that tab to narrow your search.

For this example, we are going to walk through the Master List taking the CTE route.



Select a Route

Explore a Career Cluster

Within your selected route, credentials are organized by career cluster. Use the career clusters to narrow your search to a broad area of interest and explore the credentials available within that field.

For this example, we'll explore the Digital Technology career cluster within the CTE route.

FC STATE CODE	First Credential Route	Career Cluster	FIRST CREDENTIAL NAME	Issuer / Industry Recognized: Indicator that credential is: Aligned to Rigorous Standards, Employer Validated
			Completer	Education
FCCTE06	CTE	Agriculture	Animal and Veterinary Science CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE07	CTE	Arts, Entertainment and Design	Fashion Apparel and Textiles CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE08	CTE	Arts, Entertainment and Design	Graphic Design and Communication CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE09	CTE	Business Management and Entrepreneurship	Business CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE10	CTE	Construction	Architectural and Interior Design CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE11	CTE	Construction	Construction and Structural Systems CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE12	CTE	Digital Technology	Cybersecurity CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE13	CTE	Digital Technology	Information Technology Systems CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE14	CTE	Digital Technology	Programming and Software Development CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE15	CTE	Digital Technology	Web Development CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE16	CTE	Education	K-12 Education CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education
FCCTE17	CTE	Education	Pre K: Early Childhood Education CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education

Select a Career Cluster

Explore a Credential

Within each career cluster, you'll find credentials associated with that field. Review the available credentials to identify opportunities that align with the student's interests and goals.

For this example, we'll explore the Cybersecurity CTE Completer credential.

Career Cluster	First Credential Name	
Digital Technology	Cybersecurity CTE Completer	Select a Credential
Digital Technology	Information Technology Systems CTE Completer	
Digital Technology	Programming and Software Development CTE Completer	
Digital Technology	Web Development CTE Completer	

Explore Occupations

Once you've selected a credential, review the occupations associated with it. A credential may align with one or more occupations, helping you understand the types of work it may support.

For this example, we'll look at the occupations associated with the Cybersecurity CTE Completer credential.

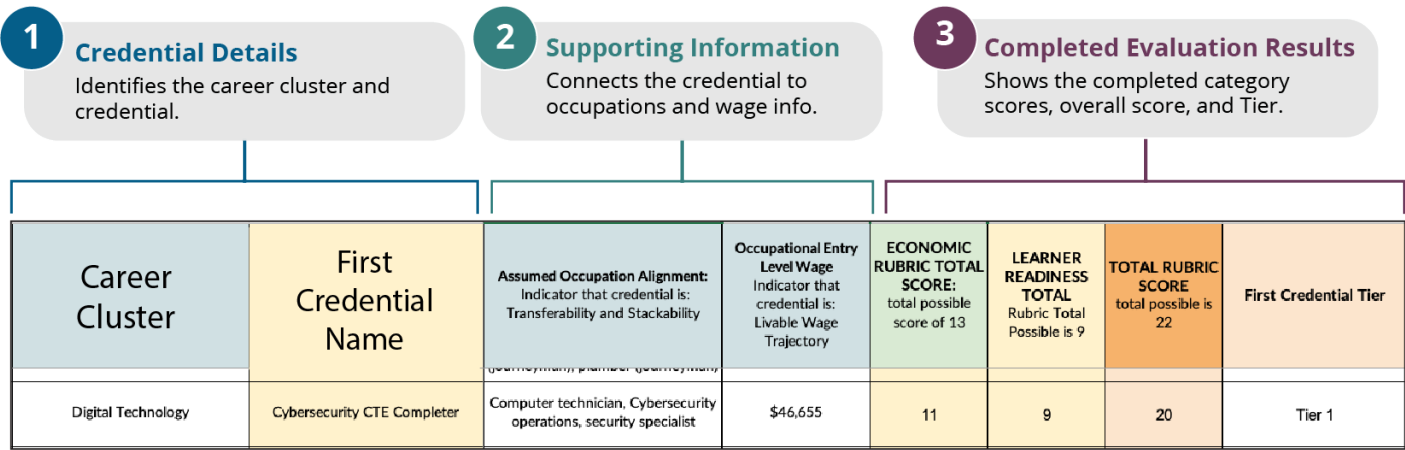
Career Cluster	First Credential Name	Issuer / Industry Recognized: Indicator that credential is: Aligned to Rigorous Standards, Employer Validated	Assumed Occupation Alignment: Indicator that credential is: Transferability and Stackability
Digital Technology	Cybersecurity CTE Completer	Utah Career and Technical Education	Computer technician, Cybersecurity operations, security specialist

Review Related Occupations

Review the Credential Information

Once you’ve identified a credential, read across its row to explore the occupations it supports, related workforce information, and its completed evaluation results. Use this information to better understand the credential’s value and how it may align with the student’s interests and goals.

This example breaks down the information provided for a credential and shows how the different components work together.



Remember: The scores and Tier have already been calculated. Use these results alongside the student’s interests and goals when considering credential opportunities.

Understanding This Example

The Cybersecurity CTE Completer credential is within the Digital Technology career cluster and aligns with occupations including computer technician, cybersecurity operations, and security specialist. The listed occupational entry-level wage is \$46,655.

The credential received an Economic Rubric Total Score of 11 out of 13 and a Learner Readiness Total of 9 out of 9, resulting in an overall rubric score of 20 out of 22 and a Tier 1 designation.

About the Evaluation Framework

The First Credential evaluation framework was developed collaboratively with representatives from education, workforce development, employers, and other partners. The criteria are designed to consider both workforce value and meaningful opportunities for students.

The Master List is reviewed and updated over time to reflect changes in credentials, workforce needs, and economic conditions.

Want to Know How the Scores Were Determined?

The scores and Tier shown in the Master List have already been calculated for each credential. You do not need to complete the evaluation yourself. The following section provides additional context about the criteria, ratings, and scoring process used to determine those results.

How Credential Evaluations Are Determined

Each credential on the First Credential Master List is evaluated using criteria that consider both its economic value and its readiness for learners. These criteria are grouped into two categories: **Economic Threshold** and **Learner Readiness**. Each criterion receives a rating that contributes to the credential's overall score and Tier designation.

Economic Threshold

Does the credential connect students to meaningful workforce opportunities?

Economic Threshold criteria consider the workforce value of a credential, including earning potential, employment demand, employer recognition, and opportunities for continued growth across occupations and industries.

Livable Wage Trajectory

Looks at entry and mean wages and whether the occupation demonstrates progression toward a livable wage.

Demand-Aligned Occupation

Considers the number of job openings associated with the occupations and evidence of workforce demand.

Employer Validation

Considers evidence that employers recognize, help shape, or hire individuals who earn the credential.

Transferability

Looks at whether the credential applies across multiple occupations or career areas, creating broader opportunities.

Utah Prioritized Industry

Recognizes credentials connected to Utah prioritized industries or community vital services which receive an additional point.

Together, these criteria provide a broader picture of a credential's economic value, from wages and workforce demand to employer recognition and opportunities across career areas.

Learner Readiness

Is the credential attainable for students, and does it support future opportunities?

Learner Readiness criteria consider whether students can reasonably access and complete the credential and whether it provides meaningful opportunities for continued education, training, or employment.

Stackability

Explores whether the credential provides clear next steps into additional credentials, training, apprenticeships, or employment.

Time to Completion

Considers whether the credential can reasonably be completed or meaningfully started during high school.

Availability and Accessibility

Identifies whether age, testing, prerequisites, work experience, or other requirements create barriers.

Together, these criteria provide a broader picture of how attainable a credential is for students and the opportunities it may provide for continued education, training, or employment.

Understanding Ratings

Each criterion within the Economic Threshold and Learner Readiness categories has been evaluated using a 0–3 rating scale. These ratings contribute points to the credential's overall score, which determines its Tier.

Ratings are based on defined requirements for each criterion, not a subjective assessment.

Each criterion has specific benchmarks for earning a rating from 0–3. The benchmarks vary depending on what is being measured.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
|  | 3: Highest Rating 3 Points |
|  | 2: Mid Rating 2 Points |
|  | 1: Low Rating 1 Point |
|  | 0: Lowest Rating No Points |

The following sections explain the specific benchmarks used to determine each criterion's rating.

Livable Wage Trajectory

- **3 Highest Rating**
Entry wage reaches at least two-thirds of Utah's livable wage for one adult and one child, and the mean wage reaches or exceeds the mean wage for the occupation.
 - **2 Mid Rating**
Entry wage reaches at least one-third of the livable wage, and the mean wage reaches two-thirds of the livable wage.
 - **1 Low Rating**
Shows wage progression but remains below the benchmark.
 - **0 Lowest Rating**
Shows no evidence of progression toward a livable wage.
-

Demand-Aligned Occupation

- **3 Highest Rating**
More than 2,500 annual job openings in Utah.
 - **2 Mid Rating**
500–2,499 annual Utah job openings.
 - **1 Low Rating**
Fewer than 500 Utah job openings and low national demand.
 - **0 Lowest Rating**
Limited to no evidence of demand.
-

Employer Validation

- **3 Highest Rating***
At least three Utah employers and one national employer are documented as helping design or update the credential or hiring individuals who earn it.
- **2 Mid Rating**
Employer validation is limited, localized, or weakly documented.
- **1 Low Rating**
Employer references are more than three years old or fewer than three employer validation points are available.
- **0 Lowest Rating**
Limited to no evidence of employer validation.

**Technical College Certifications and Apprenticeships may meet this rating through college accreditation and Department of Labor validation; CTE credentials may use industry board documentation.*

Transferability

- **3 Highest Rating**
The credential is relevant to at least three occupations and across multiple career clusters.
 - **2 Mid Rating**
The credential provides useful skills and experience but does not easily transfer to other occupations or industries.
 - **1 Low Rating**
The credential is specific to one occupation but is often used in the hiring process.
 - **0 Lowest Rating**
Limited evidence that the credential is used in hiring for any occupation.
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Stackability

- **3 Highest Rating**
Provides multiple clearly defined next steps into additional credentials, apprenticeships, technical college certificates, or postsecondary degree programs.
 - **2 Mid Rating**
Provides a clear next step into additional education, training, or employment, but with limited evidence of multiple advancement opportunities.
 - **1 Low Rating**
Supports entry-level employment or a highly specialized pathway, with limited evidence of continued education or training opportunities.
 - **0 Lowest Rating**
No documented evidence of stackability or future advancement opportunities.
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Time to Completion

- **3 Highest Rating**
Can reasonably be completed during high school and represents approximately 300 or more hours of instruction, applied learning, work-based learning, or demonstrated competency. If it cannot be completed during high school, completion is feasible within a 450-hour total process.
- **2 Mid Rating**
Can begin during high school but typically requires significant additional time after graduation.
- **1 Low Rating**
Is too limited in scope to represent a meaningful First Credential or generally cannot be attained by high school students.
- **0 Lowest Rating**
Is an advanced credential or is not designed for entry-level learners.

Availability and Accessibility

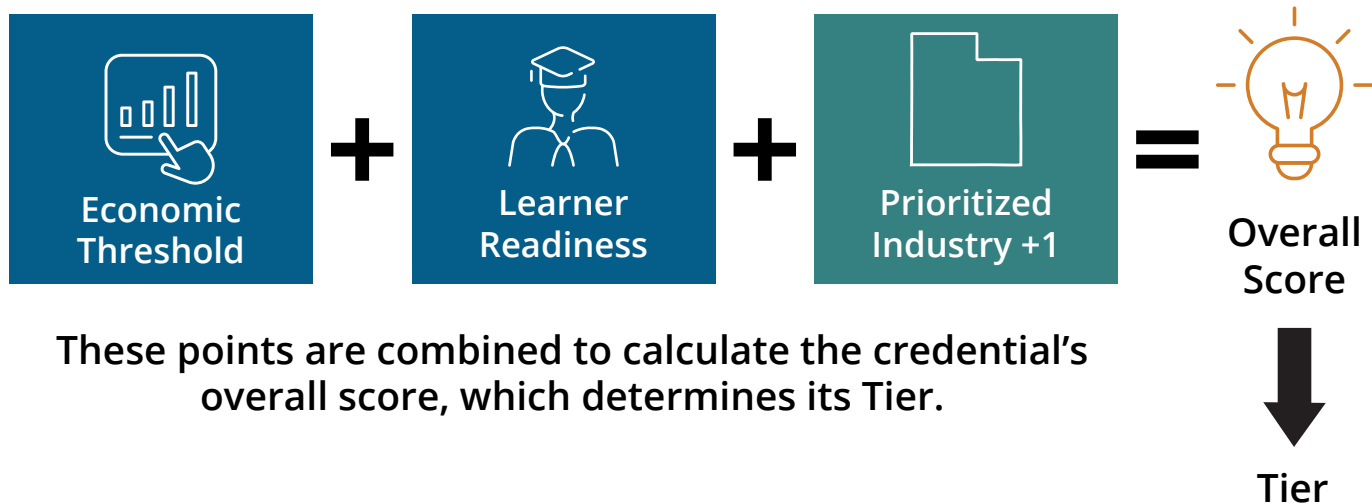
- **3 Highest Rating**
Can reasonably be completed during high school with no limitations to enrollment.
- **2 Mid Rating**
Can begin during high school but has age, testing, or other barriers that may require completion after graduation.
- **1 Low Rating**
Has significant barriers related to restrictions, work experience, or prerequisites that make high school completion unlikely.
- **Lowest Rating**
Cannot currently be offered in Utah high schools due to limited access to qualified instructors, necessary equipment or delivery models, and/or statewide course codes or reporting mechanisms.

Additional Point: Utah Prioritized Industry

Credentials associated with a Utah Prioritized Industry or Community Vital Service receive one additional point toward the Economic Threshold rubric calculation.

Understanding the Overall Score

The overall score shown in the Master List has already been calculated. It combines the points earned across the Economic Threshold and Learner Readiness criteria and is used to determine the credential's Tier designation.



These points are combined to calculate the credential's overall score, which determines its Tier.

The overall score brings the individual ratings together, making it easier to understand how a credential performed across the full evaluation and where it falls within the Tier system.

Understanding the Tiers

The credential's overall score determines its Tier designation. Tiers help LEA leaders and counselors prioritize credential opportunities based on how strongly each credential performed across the full evaluation.

Tier 1

17+ points | Above 75%

Credentials that scored most strongly across the Economic Threshold and Learner Readiness criteria.

Tier 2

15–16 points | 68–75%

Credentials that meet the requirements for inclusion and received a lower overall evaluation score than Tier 1 credentials.

Tier 3

13–14 points | 59–68%

Credentials that meet the requirements for inclusion and received a lower overall evaluation score than Tier 1 or Tier 2 credentials.

Tier designations are intended to influence and help prioritize credential opportunities, but Tier is only one part of the decision. Consider the student's interests and goals alongside the credential's Tier and supporting information. All credentials included on the Master List are considered worthwhile options.

First Credential Scholarship

Students who earn a First Credential may be eligible for the First Credential Scholarship beginning with the graduating class of 2027. The scholarship supports continued education and may be used at eligible degree-granting institutions and technical colleges for tuition, fees, books, supplies, and other approved educational expenses.

The scholarship is valid for three years after high school graduation and may be combined with other state-sponsored scholarships. Eligibility is based on earning an approved First Credential, **regardless of Tier**.



Award amounts are determined annually based on available legislative funding and the number of eligible students

Using the Master List

The First Credential Master List is designed to support informed conversations about credential opportunities. Use the student's interests and goals to explore relevant routes, career clusters, credentials, and occupations, then consider the supporting information and Tier designation to help prioritize options.

Remember, the scores and Tiers have already been determined and are provided as tools to support decision-making. They are one part of the conversation, not a replacement for the student's individual interests, goals, and plans for the future.



Start with the
student's
interest



Use the Master
List to review
options



Help the
student
choose a path



Guide the
student toward
success