



STEP 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Fiscal Year 2027

First Credential Needs Assessments Due: November 16, 2026



**Enabling job opportunities
and career transitions**

**Building confidence
for the future**

**Expanding access to
higher education**

Questions regarding First Credential may be directed to: firstcredential@schools.utah.gov

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The First Credential Program: Needs Assessment

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Overview

The [First Credential Program](#) is a statewide initiative that enables every high school student to graduate with a diploma while earning a credential through one of five different routes. The program aims to bridge the gap between high school, higher education, and the workforce. Providing students with stackable credentials accelerates a student's journey to a college certificate, a college degree or a high-paying career.

The program provides five distinct **First Credential routes** designed to serve as clear on-ramps to future opportunities. Students can earn a credential through any of the following routes:

- **Concurrent Enrollment (CE):** Completing 12–18 concurrent enrollment credits, including a required course in both Writing and Quantitative Literacy.
- **Technical College Certificate:** Completing an approved certificate or a meaningful portion (at least 300 hours) of an approved certificate from a Utah public technical college.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway Completer:** Completing a state-approved sequence of high school courses aligned with a specific industry sector.
- **Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC):** Earning an industry-recognized credential included on the **First Credential Master List**.
- **Youth Apprenticeship:** Completing a minimum of 300 hours in an approved youth apprenticeship pathway that leverages a state public secondary or postsecondary institution as the related training instruction (RTI).

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can apply for First Credential grants to launch or expand programs tailored to the specific needs of their district and local community. This flexible funding allows schools to invest in necessary infrastructure and personnel to get high-demand pathways off the ground—including purchasing equipment for CTE labs, IRC exam fees (IRC must appear on the approved First Credential Master Credential List), or stipends for specialized educator certifications. By utilizing these funds for start-up purposes, districts can establish permanent, regional routes that directly serve their students and employers.

For the First Credential Program, available funds are determined by the legislature each year and LEAs can request up to \$250,000. To access this funding, LEAs must first conduct a comprehensive Needs Assessment. This assessment is designed to evaluate an LEA's current offerings and capacity, driving the development of an Implementation Plan (the application for funding) and future spending decisions. The Needs Assessment provides a vital opportunity to identify targeted areas for improvement and ensures that every student has access to a credential of real value.

Definitions:

Apprenticeship: An industry-driven career pathway that combines paid work experience, classroom instruction, and skills demonstrations and passoffs by partnering employers leading to a certification, degree, and/or Department of Labor apprenticeship completion. Apprenticeships are a type of work-based learning but not all work-based learning would be counted as an apprenticeship.

Duplication of Effort: Students retaking courses or redoing training in college that they already mastered through high school credentials, industry certifications, or prior learning.

Early College: A high school program or a specialized high school designed to allow students to earn a high school diploma and significant college credit—often an associate degree or up to two years of transferable credit.

General Education Certificate (Certificate of Completion): An academic credential awarded to students who finish the entire "core" curriculum required for an associate or bachelor's degree.

Qualified Proctor: A qualified teacher who gives a CTE industry exam to students.

Qualified Teacher: A professional individual who meets the qualifications of the institution or industry.

Special Populations: Student groups that face barriers to educational opportunities. These groups are defined in Perkins V law as: individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults; individuals preparing for non-traditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; out-of-workforce individuals; English learners; homeless individuals described in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C 11434a); youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces (as such term is defined in section 101(a)(4) of title 10, United States Code) and is on active duty (as such term is defined in section 101(d)(1) of such title).

Stackability: Refers to credits or certifications earned in high school that are intentionally designed as "building blocks" that fit into larger postsecondary certifications, degrees or career pathways (without requiring students to retake any coursework).

Work-Based learning (WBL) (not work release): Combines classroom instruction and academic preparation with real-world, hands-on experiences through education and industry partnerships to help students build skills, collaborate, solve problems, and meet workplace expectations under the guidance of a mentor (i.e., job shadow, field study, or lecture from a professional guest speaker).

NEEDS ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Documentation should be provided for verification. Unverified information will not be scored.

For additional information and rubrics, see the [Needs Assessment Guide](#).

1. **Conduct the Needs Assessment:** Evaluate your current offerings and capacity.
2. **Identify Improvements:** Pinpoint targeted areas for growth to ensure student access to high-value credentials.
3. **Complete & Sign this Needs Assessment**
4. **First Credential Needs Assessments Due:** Email the completed needs assessment to firstcredential@schools.utah.gov by November 16, 2026 @ 5:00 pm.
5. The First Credential Oversight Committee will provide feedback on your Needs Assessment plan.
6. **Develop an Implementation Plan:** Utilizing the feedback from the First Credential Oversight Committee, use your assessment findings and committee recommendations to create your funding application and guide future spending.

SECTION 1 - LEA PROFILE

Please list the name of the LEA and each school you are representing in this needs assessment:

LEA Name: _____

Names of Schools Included: _____

Total LEA/School Enrollment: _____

Number of Schools Participating: _____

Contact Information

Official contact (team lead) designated by the LEA/school who is responsible for answering or responding to inquiries regarding this application and is also established as the “authorized representative” for this agency.

- Name: _____
- Official Position Title: _____
- Phone Number: _____
- Email: _____

Official secondary contact designated by the LEA/school who is responsible for answering or responding to inquiries regarding this application and is also established as the “authorized representative” for this agency.

- Name: _____
- Official Position Title: _____
- Phone Number: _____
- Email: _____

SECTION 2 - PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

A. Targeted Pathway(s) and Program(s)

List the program(s) or pathway(s) the First Credential implementation grant will target.

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B. Program & Course Inventory

List courses currently offered in each route, organized by targeted program(s) or pathway(s). Include partner information for each program or pathway accessible to students in your LEA.

Credential / Route	Program / Pathway	Courses	Partner
CE (Concurrent Enrollment Master List (CEML))			Name of USHE Institution
CTE			
Tech College (Identify whether the course is taught on-campus or at the HS campus)			Name of Tech College(s)
Industry Recognized Credential (IRC)* (e.g., CNA, CompTIA, ASE)			Name of Industry Recognized Credential *IRC must appear on the First Credential Master List.
Youth Apprenticeship			Name of Apprenticeship(s)

C. Stackability & Postsecondary Alignment - Describe how the program leads to additional credentials, degrees, or careers.

Are the credentials offered in the LEA's available routes stackable? *(Do they act as "building blocks" for a higher degree or advanced industry certification?)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are the CE courses offered included in a USHE General Education (GE) Certificate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do your CE offerings include the required Writing and Quantitative Literacy "door-opening" courses?

☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION 3 - CAPACITY & READINESS

A. Staffing - Identify instructors and qualifications:

Role	Qualified Staff	List Additional Needed
CE Instructors (R277-701-10)		
CTE Instructors		
Tech College / Shared		
Qualified Proctor for IRC Assessments		

Describe your LEA's ability to hire, recruit, retain, and support required personnel.

Does your instructional staff receive regular training on serving a diverse population of students, including but not limited to students with disabilities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, describe the training.

B. Facilities & Equipment

Capacity	Assessment Criteria	Y/N	Implementation & Start-Up Details
Current: Physical Space	Do you have the needed space for the current pathway(s)/programs(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	List needed renovations or facility modifications:
Future: Physical Space	What space is needed or required for future pathway(s)/program(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	List needed renovations or facility modifications:

Accessible: Physical Space Is the space accessible to students with disabilities? ☐ Yes ☐ No List needed renovations or facility modifications:

Current: Equipment Inventory Do you have the necessary equipment for the current pathway(s)/program(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No List high-cost equipment needed:

Future: Equipment Inventory What equipment is needed to implement targeted pathway(s) or program(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No List high-cost equipment needed for future needs:

Equipment Lifecycle

Describe the long-term plan for maintaining, upgrading, or replacing equipment.

Additional Needs

What other specific resources are required to launch or expand the LEA's targeted pathway(s) or program(s)?

C. Schedule & Enrollment

Focus Area	Strategic Recommendation	Y/N	Implementation Details
Schedule Flexibility	Does the LEA's course catalog or master schedule accommodate the targeted pathway(s) or program(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	If not, what changes to the master schedule would need to be made to accommodate the targeted pathway(s) or program(s)? _____ _____

Student Interest	Would adding a pathway or program cause the discontinuation of another pathway or program?	☐ Yes ☐ No	List programs/pathways that would be discontinued:
Student Interest	Is there documented student demand (student interest survey) for the targeted pathway(s) or program(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	List current enrollment numbers or student survey data:
Marketing Campaigns	What marketing and outreach activities are needed to adequately promote the targeted pathway(s) or program(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Outline planned recruitment events, social media, or mailers:
Program Sustainability	Is the projected enrollment high enough to sustain the program and faculty beyond the initial start-up funding phase?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Projected enrollment for years 1, 2 & 3:

D. Transportation

Does your LEA's transportation capacity meet the needs of your students?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "Yes," skip this section. If "No," complete this section.

Barrier Category	Needs Assessment Criteria	Y/N	Implementation & Start-Up Details
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Off-Campus Access	Does the LEA have dedicated vehicles or a budget for busing students to regional Technical Colleges (e.g., MTECH, Davis Tech)?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	Identify specific busing gaps (planning inputs) or required van purchases.
Personnel Needs	Are there personnel needs for transportation?	☐ Yes ☐ No	List personnel needs below:
Budget Sustainability	Is there a long-term budget allocated for maintenance, fuel, and driver staffing beyond the initial start-up funding phase?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Describe fuel/maintenance funding source:
Special Populations	Does the transportation plan provide fair access for students with disabilities or those in rural areas?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Note specific accommodations or rural route adjustments:

E. Barriers

What are the specific local obstacles (e.g., funding, geography, policy) preventing implementation?

F. Leadership Support

Describe how LEA and school leadership demonstrate commitment to the First Credential program and its goals. How is First Credential aligned with the strategic objectives of the LEA?

SECTION 4 - INDUSTRY & POSTSECONDARY PARTNERSHIPS

A. Industry Partnerships and Labor Market Demand

List active industry partners and the labor market demand for your region for each targeted program or pathway.
Provide verification of industry partner demand.

Program or Pathway	Industry Partner	Regional Labor Market Demand	Industry Partner Verification of Demand

B. Postsecondary Partnerships

USHE Partnerships & Support: Which Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and other postsecondary partners do you work with, and what specific support (advising, grants, faculty) is provided?

Partnership Communication: How does your LEA maintain continuous communication and formal alignment with the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and post-secondary institutions to ensure the articulation agreement effectively supports seamless student credit transfers?

Program Expansion: Describe existing and potential partnerships with USHE institutions. What support is provided by USHE institutions? What are the opportunities to expand Tech College, CE, shared instructors, specialized lab space, Early College, or articulation agreements?

C. Duplication of Effort

Current Landscape:

What programs are already in place within your contracted Tech College and/or degree-granting institutions? How effective are they at meeting student needs? What access do students within the LEA have to these programs?

What programs and courses are already available within the LEA-based technical high school (if applicable)? How effective are they at meeting student needs?

Efficiency & Logistics:

Are there scheduling conflicts or redundant courses that create a duplication of effort?

D. Duplication Analysis

Is there evidence of duplication? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, justify the need for this program:

E. Industry Alignment - Describe how the program ensures alignment with local and regional workforce partners, and provide evidence of industry collaboration that lead to credentials, certifications, degrees, or careers:

List the occupations that students will be training for while earning First Credentials in Apprenticeships, Technical College Certifications, and/or Industry Recognized Credentials.

SECTION 5 - STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS & PARTICIPATION

A. Current Student Participation by Route

Total LEA/School Enrollment: _____

First Credential Route	Student Count	% of Enrollment
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Concurrent Enrollment (CE) 12–18 college credits (including writing & math)		
CTE Pathway Completion 3.0 credits in a state-approved CTE sequence		
Technical College Certificate Certificate or 300+ hours at a Utah Tech College		
Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC)* National certifications (e.g., CNA, CompTIA, ASE) *must be on the First Credential Master List.		
Youth Apprenticeship 300+ hours of paid, structured work-based learning		
Total (Including Duplications)* Sum of participation across all 5 routes		

* *Duplications: note that a single student may be counted in multiple rows if they are participating in more than one route (e.g., a student taking both CE and a CTE Pathway).*

B. Student Demographics

Strategic Note: This section is critical for your needs assessment & grant application to ensure access to high-wage, high-demand pathways for all populations.

Category	Student Count	% of First Credential Route Enrollment
Male		
Female		
White		
Hispanic / Latino		
Black		
Asian		
American Indian / Alaska Native		
Pacific Islander		
Multiple Race		
Disability (IEP / 504)		

Economic Disadvantaged		
English Learner		
Foster Youth		
McKinney -Vento		

C. Targeted Support - *What are your specific plans to address marketing and accessibility needs for special populations?*

D. Advisory Support - *List any scheduling and advising barriers and how they will be addressed.*

LEA Certification - By completing this Needs Assessment, the LEA affirms that its First Credential planning aligns with Utah statute and the statewide First Credential Master Plan.

Authorized Representative*

Date

Title

** Note: The Authorized Representative must be the Superintendent or the LEA's authorized representative with authority to commit the LEA's resources to this project.*