

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Issued by: Non-degree Credentials Research Network (NCRN)  
Issue date: January 13, 2022  
Due Date: April 15, 2022 (Preliminary Applications)

To support research in non-degree credentialing by awarding five  
\$10,000 Research Contracts

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### NON-DEGREE CREDENTIALS RESEARCH NETWORK (NCRN)

The NCRN's mission is to advance non-degree credentialing research by fostering communication and collaboration among scholars and stakeholders. It brings together researchers and practitioners concerned with policy and practice issues related to the world of non-degree credentials - which include industry-awarded certifications, certificates, occupational licenses, badges, apprenticeships, and other microcredentials. The NCRN hosts monthly webinars and other meetings for members of the research community to share their findings and receive feedback from peers.

The NCRN is a project of the [Program on Skills, Credentials & Workforce Policy](#) (PSCWP) at George Washington University. The PSCWP supports the publication of [Workforce Monitor](#) (weekly newsletter) and disseminates information about public policies and practices that affect data collection and research opportunities related to the learn-and-work-ecosystem.

Since 2018, the NCRN has been supported by grants from [Lumina Foundation](#).

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: RESEARCH CONTRACTS

The NCRN invites bids for research contracts on critical topics of relevance to the Network. We are particularly interested in topics that align with the themes of upcoming meetings in 2022-2023; i.e., credential quality and labor market equity. We are also open to other suggestions.

Examples of topics for research contracts include:

- How should we define quality for non-degree credentials? Are there fields of study and credential types that tend to be characterized by low quality and if so, which ones? How can adult learners, especially adult students of color, best avoid low-quality credentials?
- What are the motivations of credential issuers launching new non-degree credentials?
- How do states vary in their efforts to connect job and training seekers to data on quality non-degree credentials?
- How portable are employment-aligned credentials (employer/education aligned credentialing) beyond local or regional labor markets?

- How does the regulation of non-degree credentials differ between the U.S. and other countries? What can we learn from other nations with respect to quality assurance and/or the integration of non-degree credentials (often called microcredentials in other nations) into the broader system of workforce education and credentialing?

Research contracts are expected to result in a publishable working paper, typically between 15- 30 pages in length, containing an Executive Summary. The format/style will be selected by the author.

All papers developed through this fund will be disseminated on the NCRN website, and authors will be expected to disseminate their papers (and other products resulting from their research) through other communications after presentation to the NCRN (e.g., journals, social media, conference panels, poster sessions). Authors will be asked to present their findings through either a NCRN webinar or in-meeting presentation, and are strongly encouraged to draft short blog-style articles for the NCRN's website and/or Workforce Monitor. Authors will be free to submit their work to external publications after disseminating to the NCRN.

Depending on the strength of the applicant pool, the NCRN anticipates awarding 5 contracts of \$10,000 each in 2022 - though slightly smaller or larger amounts may be considered depending on research needs. This will be the final RFP in the NCRN's current funding cycle.

Contracts can be made with individual authors and/or their institutions. Recipients will be required to complete George Washington University's [supplier registration](#) process prior to submitting invoices.

There is a two-stage application process for contracts:

1. Applicants are invited to complete a [preliminary application](#) summarizing a research topic of interest by April 15, 2022. Applicants are permitted to propose multiple topics, but each topic must be requested through a separate application. Within two weeks, the NCRN will reach out to semi-finalist applicants (estimated up to 10) to invite a final application.
2. Invited semi-finalist applicants will be required to complete an outline of the proposed research paper and a detailed summary of the research questions to be answered.

The NCRN will review preliminary and final applications in consultation with our advisory council and notify successful applicants by June 15, 2022.

Early career researchers and researchers from regionally accredited higher education institutions in the United States unable to cover direct costs associated with research will be prioritized for these contracts, as will those who incorporate the support and/or mentoring of students (for example, through Federal Work Study awards) into their proposals.

## QUESTIONS

For questions contact:

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