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Credentials of Value and Economic Mobility State Challenge

Workforce credentials are becoming more important in higher education as students and employers look for quicker ways to improve job prospects. Many states have created tuition assistance programs to help workers earn short-term credentials in important industries. According to HCM Strategists, states have invested over \$5 billion in these programs. However, little is known about the results—are learners earning more money or finding better jobs? Are they continuing their education? Are businesses filling their workforce gaps? More importantly, many states lack clear success measures, which can lead to poor implementation and conflicting priorities among agencies and institutions.

Lumina Foundation believes that smart investments in workforce credentials can benefit many adults, especially the 40 million who have some college education but no degree, and those who have never attended college. Earning a credential can be an important step toward better economic opportunities, but success depends on strong state policies. To support this effort, Lumina is launching the Credentials of Value and Economic Mobility State Challenge. This initiative will help eight to 10 states create clear, realistic strategies to help learners earn high-quality workforce credentials and reach long-term financial or educational goals.

Selected states will begin planning in 2025-26, working with national experts. During this phase, state teams will:

1. Review current state investments in workforce credentials.
2. Evaluate the success of those investments.
3. Develop a plan to improve how these investments help learners and the economy.

States that create strong action plans—including clear goals for workforce credentials and economic mobility—will be eligible for funding to support their plans.