

21 Questions to Consider When Developing a New Credential



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In AERE's experience with certifications and certificate programs, we've seen that organizations develop a program for reasons including supporting the organization's mission, seeking profit, and other strategic and financial goals. Keeping the reason for developing your program in mind, consider these 21 questions when developing a new credential:

1. Why are we developing this credential (e.g., directive, strategic, financial gains, mission driven)? For who?
2. Is there a demand for this credential, both initially and after the credential is introduced?
3. Are there similar credentials being offered? If so, how do we differentiate our program from other programs?
4. What is the intrinsic (e.g., professional development, life-long learning) and extrinsic (e.g., financial and career gains) value of this credential? In other words, what will this credential do for the stakeholder (e.g., credential holder, public, employers, and association)?
5. How do we determine price of the program? What are our pricing models?
6. Can my organization afford to develop and maintain this credential? At what point would the credentialing program not be feasible?
7. What are the typical barriers to entry for this program? Barriers for maintaining the credential?
8. Should we be developing a suite of credentials (e.g., basic, intermediate, high level)?
9. Is there courseware or other knowledge sources related to this credential? Will the individuals taking these courses or using these knowledge sources register for an exam?
10. How should we market this credentialing program? What communication channels should we consider (e.g., word of mouth, social media)? What about partnering, B2Bs, and endorsements?
11. What communication resources and documents should be developed and protected for this new credential (e.g., website, candidate handbook, candidate agreement)? Keep in mind copyright, patent, and license considerations.
12. How long will it take to develop this credential program? What resources do we need to develop and maintain the program (e.g., SMEs/volunteers, staff time, space, equipment/technology, vendors –test development, delivery, customer service, data and web services, consultants)?
13. What should the eligibility requirements be to sit for the exam (e.g., experience, education, references, work portfolio, verification of work/hours, internship, residency, contact hours, another credential)?
14. Should we pursue ANSI or NCCA accreditation? If so, what are the deciding factors (e.g., time, costs, value)?
15. How many items should be on an exam form? How many exam forms should we create?
16. Should we consider item types other than single answer multiple choice questions? What types and why?
17. Should we consider a performance assessment? If so, why?
18. How should we deliver this exam (e.g., paper and pencil, computer-based, internet-based, hybrid)?
19. What are typical things that could go "wrong" (e.g., lack of strategic buy-in, low volume, breach of items, inflated passing rates, incorrectly keyed or irrelevant items, errors with the payment system)?
20. Should we consider offering this credential in more than one language? Are we prepared to invest money and time for a translated and adapted exam and exam support, such as candidate agreements and websites?
21. What are the requirements for a credential holder to maintain their certification?