# Certification Pathways Spotlight:
## Stackable Credentials

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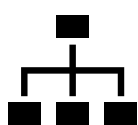
In this One-Pager, AERE is highlighting a rapidly growing trend in the certification industry: **stackable credentials**. These certification programs are seeing an increase in development by professional associations and schools as they offer more flexibility in meeting the needs of our rapidly changing economy. Let's look at some basics of stackable credentials:

**What are they?** Stackable credentials recognize the **incremental completion** of skills within a larger certification program. Each stackable credential measures competency for a discrete **"building block"**, or content area, within a profession's body of knowledge.

**How are they used?** Vertical stacking is used in certification programs that follow a sequential hierarchy of stackable credentials towards program completion. **Horizontal stacking** allows learners to choose which related stackable credentials to earn in order to meet specific job goals.

**Why do they matter?** Stackable credentials typically require **less time and money** to earn than traditional certifications, increasing access to education and providing a less costly way to test out a career path. They also **recognize specialized skills** beyond what traditional schools may offer.

**Who offers them?** The **tech, business, and energy** industries support widespread stackable credential options, such as those from leaders Microsoft and Cisco. Many **community colleges** and offer stackable certificates through classroom or online learning.

**References**

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