



## **Helping Hawaii Students to Obtain Industry-Valued Certifications**

Industry-valued certifications are typically awarded by an industry association or trade group upon successful completion of a certification exam or course. In earning the certification, the individual demonstrated that they have acquired the right knowledge, skills and abilities to perform a certain job.

The goal of this competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) is to dramatically expand the number of high school students who obtain an industry-valued certification in high skill, high-growth occupations. Taking this step holds several benefits for high school students:

### **1) Real-World Exploration**

Industry-valued certifications let students experience and demonstrate the real-world demands of work in a practical way. Acquiring an industry-valued certification also demonstrates essential employability skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, and it signals that the awarded student has “grit,” as any student will tell you after passing a rigorous industry certification exam.

### **2) Engagement**

Industry-valued certifications keep students engaged in the learning process. [Research](#) shows students who earn industry certifications have higher Grade Point Averages, are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, are less likely to be chronically absent or have a disciplinary action, are more likely to take a dual enrollment course or an Advanced Placement course and are more likely to matriculate to a 2-year or 4-year college.

### **3) Acceleration**

Industry-valued certifications effectively focus and accelerate student learning into and through postsecondary education and into above entry-level positions. Oftentimes, the certifications are “stackable” allowing students to progress and acquire more advanced industry-valued certifications and credentials within the same industry field.

### **4) Employer Signal**

Finally, an awarded industry-valued certification validates that the student has demonstrated mastery of up-to-date skills in a career field. In fact, obtaining a certification may help students earn higher wages or an above entry-level position when they enter the workforce. For example, an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification “is the equivalent of seven years’ experience in job postings, and applicants who have [one or more] ASE [certifications] command a 21% salary premium” (Burning Glass analysis).

But the benefits are not limited to students alone. High schools – especially those that have career academies and are working alongside partners on building postsecondary career pathways– can use awarded industry-valued certifications as a key benchmark along a career

map. The tested skills in a certification exam can often transfer to multiple career pathways, retaining their relevance as the student learns and evolves their career interests.

### **The Funding Opportunity**

This funding opportunity is available exclusively for public high schools in Hawaii that offer career pathways tied to high-skill, high-growth occupations. Schools may apply to receive up to \$15,000 in financial support spread over school years 2019-20 and 2020-21. No more than five grants will be issued.

To receive a grant, the following success conditions must be met:

1. The high school must have at least one career academy with pathways in place with an active external advisory board;
2. The identified industry-valued certification(s) must be tied to an existing career pathway and reflect state/regional labor market data on high-skill, high growth industry sectors and be broad enough to open career and advanced learning doors to these fields (see [here](#) for a data tool);
3. All identified industry-valued certifications must be nationally recognized and valued (see [here](#) for a listing of the top certifications nation-wide, many of which may be relevant to Hawaii);
4. The advisory board must sign off on the proposal and the certification selection so that students know the certification holds value to Hawaii-based employers;
5. The high school must (a) submit a budget that shows at least 25 percent of the total costs tied to industry-valued certification exams are covered outside the grant and (b) articulate a plan to continue offering the certification exams once the grant cycle ends if they prove popular with academy pathways students and industry; and,
6. The high school must collect and share summary data showing how many qualified academy pathways students take and successfully earn the identified industry-valued certifications as a result of this funding opportunity.

Successful proposals will articulate the state/regional economic and workforce need, identify the career pathway(s) and selected industry-valued certification(s). They will include a budget that shows how the school is sharing in the cost of the certification exam, as well as articulate a long-term strategy to continue offering the identified industry-valued certifications. Finally, the successful proposal will also discuss how the high school will prepare and support students through the certification process.

Bonus points will be awarded for those proposals that also show evidence of postsecondary collaboration in a way that lets students eventually obtain stackable industry-valued credentials and/or college credit within their pathway.

### **Timing**

Proposal released      February 22, 2019

Optional Bidders call    February 28, 2019 8:00 HST  
1(866) 740-1260, passcode 2638920

Proposal due              March 15, 2019  
(please submit all materials to [aharris@castlefoundation.org](mailto:aharris@castlefoundation.org))

Notification              April 1, 2019

## Application

1. High School \_\_\_\_\_  
(with postsecondary and/or industry partners, if applicable)

2. Career Academy \_\_\_\_\_

3. Career Pathway(s) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Rationale. Please include a description of your school's readiness to include an industry-valued certification as well as the specific state/regional economic need that you seek to address (250 words limit):

5. Describe the industry certification to be offered, which grade spans will be targeted, roughly how many students will benefit and why this particular certification was chosen. Please be sure to include how you know that this certification holds real value to employers (250 word limit):

6. Describe how you plan to support students in successfully obtaining this certification (250 words limit):

7. (optional) Description of postsecondary and/or industry partnership to obtain stackable credentials and/or college credit within the pathway:

8. Budget. Please include a) estimated total costs over school years 2019-20 and 2020-21, b) amount requested, c) school contribution of at least 25 percent of the total as well as a narrative briefly describing your cost assumptions. *You may also propose a one-year budget for either school year.*

	<b>SY2019-20</b>	<b>SY2020-21</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Estimated total cost</b>			
<b>Request to HKLCF</b>			
<b>School contribution</b>			
<b>Total</b>			

9. Please affirm as a condition of this grant your commitment to collect and report summary data on the rates of those students taking and successfully completing the industry-valued certification.

10. Proposal must include the signature of your School Principal, Complex Area Superintendent, and Career Academy Advisory Board (community member).