

Credential Engine is revolutionizing workforce career learning ecosystems by providing accessible data on credentials. Learn how equity plays a crucial role in reshaping pathways and empowering individuals. Here in Episode 40 of Ready for Work, CEO Scott Cheney helps us uncover the key information needed for informed decision-making and how it promotes fairness. Explore the transformative power of open data and modern tech in education and career guidance to enhance your region's career learning workforce ecosystem.

Voices of Excellence on Episode 40



Scott Cheney, CEO
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- [Credential Engine Equity Advisory Report](#)
- [July 21 Equity Webinar \(Credential Engine Events Page\)](#)
- [Credential Engine Overview Video](#)
- [ACT Center for Equity in Learning and Overview Video](#)
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Transcript of Episode 40

Jingle Open with Music: [Let's Get Ready for Work](#)

Scott Cheney: We need to do some conscious focus on how are we defining equity and who is it we're trying to serve. A definition of equity that would guide this body's work. There was really no controversy around it. It was just a good exercise to have us start off the process.

Jasen Jones: Stay tuned for a game-changing episode on equity and transparency in education and credentials. Scott Cheney of Credential Engine joins us on Episode 40 of Ready for Work.

Podcast Open: Ready for Work is a podcast from ACT spotlighting excellence and innovation throughout the workforce ecosystem. Jasen Jones hosts this journey with trends and ideas to help your region's workforce reach its highest potential. Now, let's get Ready for Work!

Jasen: Credential Engine is revolutionizing workforce career learning ecosystems by providing accessible data on credentials. Learn how equity plays a crucial role in reshaping pathways and empowering individuals. Here in Episode 40 of Ready for Work, CEO Scott Cheney helps us uncover the key information needed for informed decision-making and how it promotes fairness. Explore the transformative power of open data and modern tech in education and career guidance to enhance your region's career learning workforce ecosystem.

Please set the stage for us, Scott, on what drives the mission of Credential Engine to ensure accessible and open data on credentials, the basic currency we use every day for skills.

Scott: Credential Engine is focused on ensuring that all information about all credentials of all types from badges, certificates, licenses, degrees, apprenticeships, etc., about a million of those in the country, and all providers of those credentials, so about 60,000 different organizations provide credentials. Our work is to make sure that all of that information is accessible, all as open, interoperable data on the Web.

Jasen: How would you describe these gaps and the impact for individuals lacking support?

Scott: So as we've been working on that mission, we realize that just having basic information about all those credentials, while valuable, may not be exactly what every worker, student, learner, employer, really needs in order to be able to make their best decisions, and importantly, to be able to focus on picking the right credentials that help maximize the likelihood of their having an equitable outcome.

Jasen: These equity gaps affect working learners in profound ways.

Scott: We as an organization recognize that there are people who have been really poorly-served by our nation's education and training systems for years and likely aren't going to have improvements made just out of the goodness of organizations' hearts. We need to do some conscious focus on how are we defining equity and who is it we're trying to serve.

Jasen: How did the priorities evolve at Credential Engine to overcome these challenges?

Scott: What we decided to do was to pull together a group of national experts to help us think through basically two questions. What exactly are the pieces of information that a student or a counselor or parent, a job changer may want to know about credentials and providers and pathways. in order to really help them make their best decisions. And second, once we were able to identify those pieces of information and. let's say we end up getting them published from all of these providers, how can we make sure that the companies that build counseling, navigation,

pathway tools are using those data in ways that actually help an individual sort through this maze of credentials, find what they need. and be able to act on that information. and so that they can maximize the likelihood of having their best outcome.

Jasen: Why was it important to more clearly define the equity issues?

Scott: Knowing that there are lots of different definitions, there are lots of different approaches to equity, the council sat down and decided on a definition of equity that would guide this body's work. We're not suggesting that it is only definition. We're not suggesting it is the best definition, but it was the definition that this council came to, center our work on, in order to be able to then talk about what are those data points. What are the pieces of information that will help advance that definition of equity and help us to realize it.

Jasen: It's impressive how Credential Engine launched such an important journey with high momentum.

Scott: So, we recognize that there are many populations that are poorly-served. We wanted to identify those populations primarily and think about, what is the best way to approach this question of transparency in order to help them. So it didn't take a lot of work to get there. And there was really no controversy around it. It was just a good exercise to have us start off the process.

Jasen: Give us a quick flyover of the three tiers and how each one originated.

Scott: You know, if we think about the two sides of the coin, if you are an organization that owns or issues as a provider of credentials, we really encourage you to look at these three tiers that the council identified. If you look at those, you'll recognize that we sorted them very intentionally. They cut across a lot of different types of data. So, we want to make sure you're sharing information about things like cost very important in order for someone to make informed decision. So, what's the full cost of attendance, financial assistance, consideration, and what are the kind resources that are available? How are they distributed and when can you get them? Are there criteria you have to reach in order to have some financial aid release? Are there advisory supports? What kind of counseling and support do you get in just making decisions about what courses you should be taking, in what order, in order to accomplish? Also, what kind of assistance is there for tutoring or anything else that might be helpful in order to have you be able to complete that. So, we looked across a wide range of types of information a student may want to know. And then these three tiers come into play by saying, we know that not all of these data points are going to be easily identified and found.

Jasen: Scott, I appreciate how customer-focused design informs each tier.

Scott: So, the first tier of data we refer to as, no excuses, and really we're saying to the field, this is information you have now, you should be making this public, and we encourage you to step up and publish that information right away. There's really no reason you shouldn't do this. The second tier we recognize is going to maybe take a little bit of work on in institutions or providers, aside. So, you know, that could be a community college, it could be a university, it could be an apprenticeship program, it could be an industry certification body, whoever it is that's actually providing that, might have to go back and do a little bit more digging. So, take your time, pull it together share it and publish it when you can.

Jasen: As the tiers grow in complexity, what are we facing in the third segment?

Scott: The third tier actually might entail some policy conversations and some decisions that have to be reached by the field as a whole. One example might be things around social mobility. We as a country have not really done a good job of defining what social mobility looks like. And if a credential is actually helping someone not just get one job, but are able to improve the trajectory ahead of them, or that they were able to realize, by having taken something. So, there's some work that we need to do. So, we're calling on the field to actually step up and work with us to define some of these things.

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Jasen: Scott, any member of the workforce ecosystem has an important role here and something to takeaway.

Scott: So if you're a provider or an owner of credentials, there is a very clear set of activities and set of data points you can be working on now. If you're an organization whose mission is to use data and provide it to students and workers and others through counseling, pathway navigation, kind of guidance tools, we really want to encourage you to think about incorporating open data and incorporating link able data into your tools, so that you're really revolutionizing how students can interact with these data, and how they can have more power to be able to search all the options that are out there make better decisions.

Jasen: From a working learner's perspective, how does this improve the navigation experience?

Scott: The easiest analogy that we give is, you know, the days when you would call Triple A. You're taking a trip and they would send you trip tix, literally a paper or bound copy of it. Here's what you

should do. And you're flipping through the trip tix as you're making your way across country. And now you call up Triple A and they're going to send you a link to their app that does all of it for you and allows you on the fly to be looking at all of the options for all of the museums and all the restaurants and all the hotels. As you're approaching Topeka, you're still 60 miles away, but you're trying to think about, you know, where am I going to stay and where am I going to eat and what should I see the next day? It's not on trip tix, it's on your phone. That's linkable data. And we want all of these companies to think about, how do we transform how we're serving students, so that we move from a trip tix world into an open app world.

Jasen: That's a very helpful analogy to help us understand what improves for the user and how these gains radiate everything Credential Engine is built on.

Scott: Absolutely. How every provider is thinking about how they engage their students, both potential and current, but also past students who they want to make sure are continuing to get the benefits, might return for additional training and education, or might just be using career counseling in order to continue to expand their opportunities. But still, success is going to be kind of multifold.

Jasen: Thank you, Scott, that was going to be my next question, on what success looks like for credential equity.

Scott: It's going to be, one, how many organizations are actually publishing Tier one, Tier two data with us in this open system. And we're thrilled that we already have a number of organizations who've been stepping up and saying, we're in, we want to publish this. We want to make sure that everyone has access to those data points from what we offer.

The second is going to be how many organizations are actually beginning to use these data in their tools. So, we're again very pleased that we've had a number of organizations raise their hand and say, we get it. We're going to begin to think about how do we incorporate open data. How do we begin to incorporate linkable and interoperable data, and these data fields specifically, into the tools that we're putting out as resources for students and workers.

And then the third, and we really haven't talked about this much, we want to make sure that any organization that is buying, contracting, purchasing, however you want to refer to it, counseling or navigation tool or system, whether it be for their local school a statewide higher education, whether it be for a state's workforce system, that they're actually building those data use principles that we have in the report into the RFP, and the procurement requirements for any company that they're going to hire. We've seen this work in a number of states already who have

said we're going to change what it is we're requiring of those contractors in order to use open data. We want to actually see them now begin to adopt these exact principles into those RFP and procurement processes.

Jasen: Scott, how do you recommend listeners connect with you on this important work?

Scott: We're here as a nonprofit organization with the mission of ensuring open, transparent data. And we do that through a data language that is open source and Creative Commons license. So, we're not asking you to come use a proprietary credential engine system. We're asking you to make a commitment to open data using an open tool that anyone can use. We have free resources on the website in order support you being able to publish. It is becoming the standard for describing providers credentials competencies out there.

So, we would invite anyone to come to credential engine dot org. You can go to our equity web page that has the report. It has all the tiers and it has a link to help you set up an account and then to begin to publish. We have resources that lay out each of those three tiers of data and show you exactly how to publish those data points into open data language. You can also contact us at info@credentialengine.org and we can have someone get back with you to explain how to publish answer any questions.

We are hosting a webinar on July 20th to orient people to the report, to the data recommendations, and then to walk you through any of the publishing tools. So even if you're listening to this podcast after the 20th, we'll have the webinar archived on our website and you can go there watch it. So mainly what we're asking people to do is to step up either publish their data using these tiers or to adopt those data use principles just depending on, where you are in the ecosystem.

Jasen: We appreciate CEO Scott Cheney of Credential Engine for stopping by ACT's Ready for Work podcast as we bring you episode 40 on Equity and Transparency for Education and Credentials. We'll be right back to close out with show notes and resources. Let's take a few minutes to listen in on a video from Credential Engine that provides a great summary to share the impact of this work.

[Audio on Credential Engine overview from YouTube video with captions at youtu.be/X70uISK5ync](https://youtu.be/X70uISK5ync)

Jasen: Check out our show notes page for a link to the Credential Engine Equity Advisory Report and Recommendations along with the video we just shared. Their July 20th webinar link, helps you dig deeper on this opportunity.

Representing ACT on the Equity Advisory Council is Tina Gridiron from ACT's Center for Equity in Learning. Before we wrap up, here's a quick summary on the Center and it's important function for ACT's mission.

[Audio on ACT Center for Equity in Learning from YouTube video with captions at youu.be/rUzvgx04QPs](https://youtu.be/rUzvgx04QPs)

Jasen: If you enjoyed the theme of today's podcast, you won't want to miss the closing plenary for the 2023 ACT Workforce Summit on the Future of Higher Education and Workforce Success. ACT CEO Janet Godwin moderates a panel with powerhouse leaders such as Maria Flynn of Jobs for the Future and Sarita Brown from Excelencia in Education. Registration is now open at act.org/workforcesummit. We hope to see you this October in Nashville.

Closing with Jingle: [Ready for Work](https://act.org/readyforworkpodcast) is a service from your friends at ACT, a mission-driven non-profit dedicated to helping people achieve education and workplace success. Discover more at act.org/readyforworkpodcast. Now, let's get to work!