

USDLA Excellence in Professional Development Award/Microcredentialing

Award description: This award recognizes and celebrates outstanding distance learning programs that open new pathways and empower adult learners and professionals to upskill, reskill, or pursue personal growth through flexible, accessible courses. In a rapidly evolving landscape, this award highlights distance education's vital role in meeting the growing demand for continuous, career-long development.

Micro-credentialing :

Celebrating programs that offer focused, stackable credentials designed to provide learners with targeted skills for professional advancement or personal enrichment. These initiatives enable learners to quickly gain specialized knowledge and demonstrate proficiency in emerging fields, making education agile and relevant.

Rubric:

Criterion	Strong - 10	Medium - 5	Weak - 1
Program Design & Structure	Highly modular, stackable microcredentials with clear pathways to larger qualifications. Structure enables seamless progression and flexibility.	Microcredentials exist but may not fully connect to broader credentials; pathways and structure are present but not clearly articulated or fully modular.	Isolated courses with limited or no stackability, poorly defined structure, and unclear progression for learners.
Relevance to Emerging Fields	Microcredentials target in-demand and emerging fields, developed in consultation with industry, and updated regularly.	Some credentials align with current trends, but updates or industry consultation are irregular or partial.	Little alignment with emerging fields; outdated content and lack of industry relevance.
Evidence of Skill Mastery	Assessment strategies clearly demonstrate learners' skill mastery through	Some evidence of skill mastery, but assessments are generic, or	No clear assessment of skills or external recognition. Completion is not

	authentic, practical tasks and recognized badges or certificates.	recognition lacks external validation.	tied to real-world competency.
Accessibility & Flexibility	Accessible to diverse learners with multiple entry points, self-paced options, and support for various backgrounds and needs.	Some flexibility and accessibility, but barriers remain for certain groups or schedules are rigid.	Limited accessibility, rigid delivery, and little accommodation for diverse learners.