

Fiscal impact reports (FIRs) are prepared by the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) for standing finance committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LFC does not assume responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

Current and previously issued FIRs are available on the New Mexico Legislative Website (www.nmlegis.gov).

FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Romero, GA ORIGINAL DATE 2/08/22
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 184
SHORT TITLE School Micro-Credential Project SB _____
ANALYST Armatage/Liu

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY22	FY23		
	\$1,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to HB13, HB206, SB93, SB104

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)

New Mexico State University (NMSU)

University of New Mexico (UNM)

No Responses Received

Northern New Mexico College (NNMC)

New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU)

Western New Mexico University (WNMU)

Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU)

SUMMARY

House Bill 184 appropriates \$1 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY23 and FY24 to design, implement, and evaluate a micro-credential pilot project. The two-year project will provide pre-kindergarten through 12th grade licensed teachers additional targeted professional development. PED will collaborate with LESC to convene a working group of experts to design the pilot project and determine which schools will participate. Higher education institutions would provide programming, data collection and analysis of the program. There is no effective date of this bill. It is assumed the effective date is 90 days following adjournment of the Legislature.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY24 shall revert to the general fund. Although the bill does not specify future appropriations, establishing a new program could create an expectation the program will continue in future fiscal years, therefore this cost is scored as recurring.

UNM estimates the total cost of the two-year pilot program will be \$1.35 million. The development of 30 courses that could comprise five to 15 micro-credentials could cost an estimated \$300 thousand. Other estimated costs include course delivery (\$300 thousand), learning management systems (\$250 thousand), and evaluation of the pilot (\$500 thousand).

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

As students are increasingly required to master complex 21st century competencies, teachers require professional development opportunities to further develop their pedagogical skills. LESC reports teacher professional development in New Mexico is organized by at least 14 different bureaus at PED and funded through state and federal grant programs. Many professional development trainings offered by PED are of a workshop-style, which the Center for Public Education has found to be difficult to apply in the classroom and to be largely ineffective. According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), effective teacher professional development is content focused, incorporates active learning strategies, provides opportunities for coaching and collaboration, models effective practice, provides opportunities for feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration.

Micro-credentialing represents a new and increasingly popular approach to teacher professional development. The bill defines micro-credential as “an approach to professional learning that provides teachers with the opportunity to learn and demonstrate competency in new skills, while also getting feedback from an outside evaluator and earning recognition for mastery by earning the micro-credential”. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) notes micro-credentialing is different from traditional professional development opportunities in that it focuses on evidence of a discrete skill, is personalized and on-demand, and results in a recognized, tangible validation of learning.

According to CCSSO, the micro-credentialing process typically occurs on an online platform, but may be supplemented by in-person learning opportunities. In contrast to most existing professional development opportunities that are awarded based on “seat time”, educators seeking a micro-credential submit evidence that demonstrates their competency in that area to a provider. An assessor then reviews the evidence, provides feedback, and either awards or denies the credential. This process has the potential to meet all of LPI’s best practices for effective professional development with the possible exception of sustained duration. Providers of micro-credentials may be higher education institutions, professional organizations, state boards of education or other entities. Provisions of this bill would delegate the responsibility for providing micro-credential programming, data collection and program analysis to PED in partnership with UNM, NMSU, CNM, NNMC, NMHU, ENMU, and WNMU.

Provisions of the bill require PED to determine the application requirements and applicant

evaluation criteria. The department shall also establish reporting and evaluation requirements for the program, including teacher and program measurement data. The bill requires PED to collect the following data from schools who participate in the program: how many participating teachers received one or more micro-credential, achieved self-imposed professional goals, expressed an interest in receiving more micro-credentials, felt the project helped them in the classroom, and continued in the profession of teaching.

UNM points out several considerations for the coherent development of a micro-credential framework in the state. The work group should collaborate with higher education institutions to ensure consistency, maximize the strengths of each higher education institution, and avoid duplication of coursework. CCSSO also emphasizes that effective micro-credentials are consistent across competencies, focus on evidence-based skills that are relevant to the local learning context, provide ample opportunities for feedback and reflection, and require educators to provide substantive evidence of their competency in varied, authentic contexts. UNM also emphasizes that it is imperative the program is developed with input from educators in order to ensure its relevance and that peer-to-peer engagement is central to the coursework.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

CCSSO recommends states or other entities developing a micro-credential framework for educators should consider how the micro-credential offerings will align with state and district professional development requirements. Furthermore, both CCSSO and the American Institutes for Research highlight the importance of incentivizing micro-credentials. In addition to the opportunity to select personalized professional learning and demonstrate competencies, educators can be incentivized to take advantage of micro-credentialing by formally recognizing completed “stacks” of micro-credentials as part of licensure, career advancement and compensation policies. Institutions providing micro-credentials may consider offering college credit for stacked credentials. PED identified several ways for a statewide micro-credential program to align with existing programs, including teacher evaluation and principal observations and the department’s strategic literacy initiatives.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to design, implement, and evaluate a micro-credentialing project over the course of two years. In the summer of 2020, PED acquired Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) through an emergency procurement for a statewide LMS option for all districts and schools in New Mexico. PED did not require the use of Canvas but used the platform for all PED-created professional development and noted the LMS would potentially be used for school and district personnel evaluations in the future.

Between August 2020 and January 2021, 98 local education agencies (LEA) signed up to use Canvas and users created 142 thousand local courses on the platform. The LMS served 90.3 thousand students and 11 thousand teachers. PED created 33 unique professional development courses for educators and enrolled 20.2 thousand educators for courses. Canvas has a badge system, similar to a micro-credentialing system, where users can take tests to earn a badge for demonstrating understanding of concepts. Over 11.6 thousand badges have been awarded; however, the rigor of coursework is mixed and PED has not completed an evaluation of the impact of Canvas badges on any deliverable outcomes.

RELATIONSHIP

This bill relates to House Bill 13, which makes changes to teacher residency programs; House Bill 206, which creates a secondary instructors license; Senate Bill 93, which creates a community educators license; and Senate Bill 104, which creates an alternative pathway for teacher licensure.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Micro-credentialing has been adopted in various forms by school districts, state education agencies (SEA), state boards of education, professional organizations, and through legislation. A 2020 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing by the American Institutes for Research reported at least 28 states have policies around micro-credentialing for educators through either legislation or action by the state education agency. In 24 states, at least one institute of higher education offers micro-credentials to educators. And in 11 states, school districts offer micro-credentialing.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, three states have passed legislation regarding micro-credentialing for educators. In Arkansas, educators may obtain credit for required professional development through a micro-credentialing process approved by the SEA (2017 AR H 1646). Oklahoma established a micro-credential program under the direction of the SEA and the Commission for Educational Quality and Accountability. The program allows teachers and teacher candidates to complete additional coursework to earn micro-credentials in STEM areas. The micro-credentials may be used to earn endorsements, substitute subject area competency exams and meet state professional development requirements. The courses may be offered in-person, online or blended environments (2021 OK H 2752). Virginia requires the SEA to implement standards for microcredentials for add-on endorsements and renewal of STEM teacher licenses. Assessment of educators must be based on evidence from artifacts that are scored against rubrics. The microcredentials must “...focus on interrelated competencies leading to logical teacher professional development pathways and stacks of educator microcredentials and align with the Board of Education’s ongoing work on educator professional development (2020 VA H 836).”

In other states the SEA or board of education has created its own policies or programs for micro-credentialing. For example, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) partnered with school districts, charter schools, regional service centers, higher education institutions and the Utah Education Network to create a state-wide catalogue of online micro-credential offerings for licensed educators. Educators select a micro-credential from the catalogue and submit their corresponding evidence and reflections. The submission is then approved or denied. If their submission is returned for revision, educators may resubmit their evidence for approval. Micro-credentials are stackable within different content areas. According to USBE, microcredentials provide educators two things: visible recognition of their competencies that can be shared with employers and USBE credits that can be used to meet recertification requirements. Additionally, once an educator has completed a stack of micro-credentials, they may opt to serve as a paid reviewer for that stack.

UNM suggests that micro-credential coursework could be incorporated into graduate degree programs. CNM currently offers courses, certificates and degree programs that can easily be

adapted for educator micro-credentials in relevant educational areas. CNM notes the bill could improve recruitment to the college and help with teacher retention. The college notes current enrollments in educational areas are:

- Teacher Education Degree: 728 students
- Early Childhood Multicultural Education Degree: 823 students
- Early Childhood Program Admin Certificate: 42 students
- Child Development Certificate: 220 students
- Alternative Licensure Early Childhood Multicultural Education Certificate: 12 students
- Alternative Licensure Elementary Education Certificate: 102 students
- Alternative Licensure Secondary Education Certificate: 149 students
- Alternative Licensure Special Education Certificate: 216 students
- Career Technical Education Teaching Certificate: 20 students

PED notes micro-credentialing has several advantages over traditional professional development. Traditional group-format professional development is often costly, bound by time and space, and provides little opportunity to demonstrate mastery of content. Conversely, micro-credentials can be personalized, flexible, collaborative, and give teachers real-time feedback on mastery of content.

AA/SL/acv