



Is Your Continuing Education (CE) Division Built for the Students It Actually Serves?

A SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION LEADERS

The demographic and economic shifts driving continuing education (CE) have fundamentally altered the adult learner profile. The modern post-traditional student requires a level of administrative agility, modern tech infrastructure, and workforce alignment that legacy university systems were rarely built to support.

This self-assessment is designed to help institutional leaders objectively evaluate where their division excels and where hidden operational friction may be compromising retention, revenue, and market relevance.

For each item, mark where your institution currently stands: **Not yet / In progress / In place**



Workforce Intelligence

WHAT DATA DRIVES YOUR PROGRAM DECISIONS?

Most labor market data available to CE divisions is backwards-looking, a critical bottleneck at a time of rising external stakes. While [UPCEA's 2025 State of Continuing Education report](#) cites limited data access and tech integration as persistent operating gaps, funding sources are demanding higher accountability. [HCM Strategists](#) documents over \$5.6 billion in state investments across 70 short-term credential initiatives, with funding increasingly tied directly to workforce outcomes and employer alignment.

Are you leveraging forward-looking workforce demand analytics and emerging skills trends to determine your next program launch?

Not yet In progress In place

Are employers structurally engaged in your program development process from the beginning?

Not yet In progress In place

Can you empirically demonstrate target employer demand before a program launches?

Not yet In progress In place

Marketing Segmentation

HOW ARE YOU REACHING EACH AUDIENCE?

[Adult learners drive roughly 40% of CE revenue](#), yet they navigate a fundamentally different decision-making funnel than degree-seeking students. Non-credit and workforce learners prioritize immediate speed-to-value and over-index on platforms like LinkedIn and YouTube.

Furthermore, data highlights a significant disconnect in institutional strategy: [UPCEA research](#) reveals that only 28% of institutions involve employers in microcredential marketing, despite employer partnerships being one of the strongest conversion drivers for workforce audiences. And [UPCEA data](#) shows that the cost per inquiry for non-credit programs runs around \$51, compared to \$128 for undergraduate and \$157 for graduate programs. Without audience-specific strategy and benchmarks, CE divisions routinely overpay to acquire the wrong leads.

Does your marketing strategy treat degree-seeking and non-credit learners as distinct audiences?

Not yet In progress In place

Does your media channel mix accurately reflect how adult learners make enrollment decisions?

Not yet In progress In place

Do you utilize conversion benchmarks specific to each learner population?

Not yet In progress In place

Learner Relationships

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING REPEAT ENROLLMENT?

[UPCEA research](#) shows that 82% of credential program students plan to re-enroll in future programs, and up to 75% of entry-level credential earners pursue additional education. Alumni referral programs, stackable pathways, and returning learner incentives are highly effective yet consistently underleveraged levers for growth in professional and continuing education.

Do you track and actively manage your repeat enrollment rate?

Not yet In progress In place

Do you have a systematic process for re-engaging past learners with relevant next steps, such as stackable credentials or employer-sponsored pathways?

Not yet In progress In place

Do you measure the revenue contribution of repeat learners separately from new enrollment volume?

Not yet In progress In place

Do you systematically target past learners for refresher training or recertification before their credentials expire?

Not yet In progress In place

Outcomes Infrastructure

WHAT CAN YOU SHOW ABOUT PROGRAM OUTCOMES?

Demonstrating measurable return on investment is no longer optional for professional and continuing education divisions. [The Education Commission of the States](#) finds that many states still struggle to understand how credentials and degrees translate to meaningful employment outcomes, citing fragmented data systems and limited access to wage records as the primary barriers.

Bridging this gap requires significant operational maturity. [UPCEA's 2025 State of Continuing Education report](#) identifies staffing constraints, administrative burden, and disconnected systems as the operational gaps most likely to prevent CE divisions from building a robust reporting capability. Without an automated outcomes infrastructure, leaders cannot effectively prove the value of their portfolio to students, employers, or state funders.

Can you report on post-program employment outcomes?

Not yet In progress In place

Are your CEU tracking and workforce reporting processes automated?

Not yet In progress In place

Is student outcome data accessible to your marketing, development, and leadership teams in real time?

Not yet In progress In place

How Does Your Division Measure Up?

Add your score across all four sections, awarding 0 points for each Not yet, 1 point for each In progress, and 2 points for each In place. Maximum score: 26.

0–8: Significant operational friction

Core infrastructure across learner support, program development, marketing, and outcomes is not yet adapted to the adult learner or current accountability expectations. These are addressable gaps, and they are common across the field.

9–17: Uneven operational maturity

Progress is evident in some areas, but underdeveloped capacity in others is likely creating drag on retention, revenue, or market positioning. The sections where scores cluster lowest are typically where systemic investment is most needed.

18–26: Strong operational foundation

Your division has developed meaningful capacity across the adult learner lifecycle. Sustaining this position will require continued alignment because of accelerating employer, funder, and accreditor expectations around outcomes and workforce relevance.

Noodle works with CE divisions on learner relationships, workforce intelligence, marketing strategy, and outcomes infrastructure.

If this assessment surfaced priorities that your team is ready to act on, we would welcome the conversation.



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