

2024 CPL Equity Awards

The CPL Equity Awards recognize strategies that have been proven to put CPL in reach of key sub-populations and/or increasing their CPL credit-earning

Background to the Award

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is a powerful tool that supports adult learner engagement and completion, particularly for underrepresented populations in postsecondary education. CAEL and WICHE's research has found, however, that many of the populations that can most benefit from CPL — particularly Black and lower-income adult learners — are those least likely to have earned such credit. These findings have been discussed in 2020's *The PLA Boost: Results from a 72-Institution Targeted Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Equity Paradoxes in The PLA Boost: Adult Student Outcomes and Opportunity Unrealized for Some Students despite the Potential for Improved Credit Completion*.

CAEL and WICHE are following up this research with the inaugural **CPL Equity Awards**, which will **recognize strategies that have been proven to put CPL in reach of key sub-populations and/or increasing their CPL-credit earning**. The goal will be to identify effective strategies that can be replicated by other institutions focused on improving equity in their CPL programs. Up to nine institutions may be selected as award winners.

Things You Should Know

The Awards

- The top CPL Equity Award will be a \$10,000 cash award for the institution
- 2-3 runner-up institutions will be awarded \$5,000
- Up to 5 additional institutions may be recognized with \$1,000 awards

Eligible Institutions Must:

- Be accredited Title IV institutions
- Be based in the United States
- Offer CPL as part of apprenticeship programs, postsecondary credentials, associate degrees or bachelor's degrees

Awards Timeline

- Deadline to submit any questions about the process: **November 14**
- Answers to questions shared and posted: **November 28**
- Deadline for nominations: **December 15, 2023, 6 pm CST**
- Announcement of winners: **March/April 2024**

Institutions submitting nominations for the award will be obligated to provide information about their CPL programs, how they are defining equity gaps in their CPL programs, their equity strategies, and data/evidence demonstrating their effectiveness at increasing CPL access and CPL credit-earning for key target populations.

Winning institutions will be expected to share additional details for a published resource guide on CPL Equity Strategies (subject to the winning institution's final review and approval) and may be invited to participate in public presentations with CAEL and WICHE.

What We Are Looking For

- CPL programs at institutions serving target populations where:
 - The target population had low CPL engagement (defined as inquiries into CPL and/or submitted CPL applications) and/or low CPL credit-earning. For example, the institution may have identified that the engagement rates and/or CPL credit-earning rates of the target population were 5-10 percentage points lower than average for the institution or for white/majority adult learners.
 - The institution's leadership or the CPL administrator identified the need to improve CPL engagement and credit-earning.
 - A specific change was implemented to address the equity disparity in the CPL program (e.g., in outreach strategies, advising, financial support, methods offered, crosswalking introduced, process map, etc.).
 - Data and/or other evidence was collected and examined before and after the implementation of the new strategy.
 - Data and/or other evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategy to improve the overall equity of the CPL program, which could include increasing equitable outcomes (either in terms of CPL engagement rates or CPL credit-earning rates), but may also address other important disparities.
- This award would primarily focus on equity strategies targeted to CPL methods that include the following:
 - Standardized exams (e.g., CLEP, DSST)
 - Recommendations for military credit (e.g., ACE recommendations)
 - Portfolio assessment
 - Challenge or departmental exams
 - Review of non-college programs, or credit crosswalks (e.g., for industry credentials, corporate training, licenses, certifications, apprenticeship, etc.)
 - Other adult-focused methods
 - *This award is not focused on strategies to increase AP/IB or dual enrollment credits.*

Target Populations of Interest

Equity means different things in different contexts. By equity, we mean equality in CPL access (e.g. student engagement) and outcomes (e.g., credit attainment for diverse populations). For the purposes of the 2023-2024 CPL Equity Awards, CAEL and WICHE have identified the following diverse student populations that are of particular interest:

- Black or African American adult learners
- Native American or Alaska Native adult learners
- Hispanic adult learners (of any race)
- Low-income adult learners
- Adult learners at community colleges

Other populations could be identified and explained as target populations from an equity standpoint. One example might be students working in retail or hospitality fields who are pursuing postsecondary credentials to improve their economic mobility. Another example could be adult learners in rural areas with narrower career pathway opportunities.

For the purpose of these awards “adult learners” are defined as undergraduate/ sub-baccalaureate credential students who:

- *Enroll at or after the age of 25 AND/OR*
- *Are student parents (custodial) AND/OR*
- *Are employed full time AND/OR*
- *Veterans and/or current service members*

Do you have questions about the process or the nomination form?

If so please submit any questions by November 14 [HERE](#). CAEL and WICHE will provide responses directly to you by November 28 and post a list of all questions and answers to this web page.

Links to Next Steps:

Web page: <https://www.cael.org/equity-awards>

Link to [nomination form](#)

Link to [worksheet](#) (Word version of nomination form):

Link to [terms and conditions](#)