

## **CEdMA BEST PRACTICES**

### **How to Build a Co-Branded Certification Program**

What is a Co-Branded Certification Program? This is where the exam and resulting certification carry the brand of multiple different vendors. Building such a program requires significant discussion, planning and agreement on fundamental issues between/among the sponsoring vendors. The FAQs below were developed from real world experiences and are presented to assist CEdMA members faced with similar challenges.

Here are a set of question that you should discuss in your planning. Reviewing these questions will most likely initiate additional questions/considerations. It is critical to think through these things prior to launching a program. You will also want to make sure the preferred approach is documented in a contract, SLA, Program Guide, etc where appropriate.

#### **Funding**

- How will the organizations split the development costs?
- How will the organizations split the revenue?
- What are the reporting mechanisms for documenting and processing these splits? Beware if the answer is “manual”!

#### **SLAs**

- What are the agreed SLAs between/among the sponsoring vendors for responses to each other? Be clear on this, particularly if the co-branded program is more critical to one vendor over another. If not a priority program one vendor could be very slow to respond to urgent queries – negatively impacting the sponsor where the program is more critical.
- What are the agreed SLAs for candidates? Are the customer service levels the same for each company that sponsors the exam?
- Who handles queries about the exam? What is the process for collecting feedback and communicating it across sponsors? How does this get rolled into a maintenance plan?

#### **Managing Certification Programs**

- Co-branded means managed by multiple vendor programs. How will this impact your program? Do the different sponsor organizations have similar approaches to:
  - Expiration
  - Retake
  - Security
  - Branding
- What will the “brand” be? Do sponsoring organizations use the same nomenclature (certification, accreditation, specialization, associate/specialist/expert, etc)? How do you get the brand approved through your independent branding compliance processes/departments? Do you provide logos? Digital badges?
- Do you use the same vendors for exam development, exam publication, credential tracking and reporting? If not what are the issues that may arise working with different vendors?
- Which program Ts & Cs must the candidate follow?
- Do you provide different “gifts” and “benefits”? How will this get addressed for those carrying a co-branded credential?

#### **Managing Dependent Programs (i.e. partner compliance)**

- What are reporting requirements (data and frequency) for partner compliance? Is this managed by all sponsors or only selected ones? How does certification information flow from one sponsor's certification tracking process to the other(s)?
- How do you/will you make sure that the candidate earning the certification is matched to the partner organization in your reporting system? What information/data is required in a data feed to make sure this match is made?
- Do you have consistent requirements around certification policies – i.e. expiration, retakes, etc? Who drives this – the partner program or the certification program in each sponsor organization?

### **Reporting**

- How will you report on the co-branded credential?
- Will each company share their delivery, pass/fail and registration records, as well as item performance?
- Do the sponsoring vendors have the same policies/restrictions around data privacy?
- Can your systems “talk to each other” so that the candidate appears in all relevant credential tracking systems? Should this be ensured?

### **Exam Development**

- How will the exam development process be managed? Which development process will be used (remote self-directed, virtual leader directed, physical presence leader directed)? Whose/which policies and psychometric rules are applied?
- Do the sponsor companies share the same policies/practices on exam security, and features such as delayed scoring or provisional passing?
- What are requirements around recruiting, signing up, rewarding and paying/reimbursing SMEs for participating in exam development? For example:
  - What is the required SME profile?
  - Does a SME earn exam or cert credit by participating?
  - Are they paid?
  - Is travel covered?

### **Maintenance**

- What are the different policies related to maintenance? How frequent? How in-depth?
- What are criteria for renumbering exams after update?
- What is approach to transitioning from one version to another? How are exams/credentials versioned?
- When/how do you determine the need for an in-service review? Do all organizations do this?