

# Blockchain Certification Could Make It Easier for Employers to Hire You

*Local and global credentialing programs offer formal recognition of skills and knowledge.*

By **Mark Toner** - May 29, 2018

Starting this fall, Phoenix residents seeking careers in blockchain will be able to demonstrate what they know.

[Mesa Community College](#) is launching one of the first short-term certification programs of its kind in response to the “emerging opportunities directly related to blockchain in Arizona,” Linda Collins, chair of the college’s department of business and information systems, tells *ThirtyK*.

Colleges are not alone in recognizing skills and knowledge in blockchain technology. Online programs are already following models used in other industries to allow people anywhere to earn credentials. With titles ranging from [Certified Bitcoin Professional \(CBP\)](#) and [Certified Ethereum Developer \(CED\)](#) to [Digital Currency Council \(DCC\) Certification](#), these programs, just like credentials from colleges and universities, play an important role in the buzzword-heavy world of blockchain technology.

## *FOR EMPLOYERS AND PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES ALIKE, CERTIFICATION COULD HELP SIMPLIFY THE HIRING PROCESS. BUT IT’S NOT A SILVER BULLET.*

“They are important for anyone who would like to offer independent proof that they understand a particular subject to someone who can’t validate the knowledge themselves,” [Crypto Currency Certification Commission \(C4\)](#) President Michael Perklin tells *ThirtyK*. C4 offers the CBP and CED certifications.

To date, more than 10,000 users ranging from software developers and lawyers to exchange customer support personnel and law enforcement agents have registered on C4’s website, while DCC says it has more than 1,500 members in 90 countries. Some employers, including cryptocurrency exchanges and large financial firms, are now seeking certified applicants to find the right skills for hard-to-staff jobs.

Axon software engineer Charlie Lee sees benefits on both sides of the hiring process. “As an employer, I can see CBP serving as a... test to filter out people on the **bitcoin (BTC)** bandwagon who want to ‘decentralize everything’ and don’t have the basic knowledge of how [it] works,” he [writes](#). “As a job seeker, I see CBP as a worthwhile investment because it serves as a resume line item and topic of conversation. The way I see it, if CBP helps me get my foot in [the] door three times, even if the initial conversation is just about what CBP is, then it was money well spent.”

### **A ‘Foot in the Door’**

With a board of directors including Ethereum co-founder Vitalik Buterin and bitcoin evangelist Andreas M. Antonopoulos, C4 was created in 2014 to address pervasive misinformation about bitcoin and its underlying technologies that were filtering into the hiring process, according to Perklin.

“While it was possible for people who were proficient with the technology to... identify candidates who had the knowledge, there were more and more hiring managers and presidents of companies who could not tell the difference,” says Perklin, who also serves as the chief information security officer at [ShapeShift.io](#). “We realized this had already been solved. How do HR managers identify proficient accountants when they themselves aren’t accountants? Certifications.”

In similar fashion, DCC's certification process helps "hold professionals who are advising clients to a higher standard and provide a benchmark for evaluating skill and professional value," Barry Silbert, CEO of the Digital Currency Group, explains on DCC's website.

Both organizations follow a process similar to professional certification programs in other fields. Users register and pay to take an online exam covering a broad range of knowledge that they are encouraged to know — or learn — before being tested. For example, the CED exam covers a range of topics including smart contracts, token systems, libraries and registries. DCC's curriculum is based on six core competencies and include technical underpinnings, monetary implications, accounting and finance, and regulatory and legal frameworks.

Each organization says the materials applicants need to know to pass the exam are readily available online. However, "the strict time limit ensures that only applicants who already possess the knowledge have a good chance of passing," says C4's Perklin.

### **Back to School**

College-based programs focus on both training and certifying prospective candidates. Mesa Community College's blockchain program is envisioned as a nine-credit micro-certificate, including courses in networking technology, blockchain fundamentals, a proof-of-concept in which students can create their own blockchains and internship opportunities. It is designed to be completed in less than two semesters, according to Collins. "We see this as a stackable credential that can lead to additional academic certificates and a degree," she says.

Community colleges are tasked with serving the workforce needs of their regions, and blockchain is an emerging priority for Arizona. MCC decided to create the program, Collins says, after two of the college's instructors with previous blockchain experience learned that a state lawmaker was interested in creating a program. Subsequent labor market research found several hundred consultants already working in the industry, according to Collins.

"Arizona is becoming a major IT hub, particularly in the East Valley and downtown Mesa, and including blockchain would be addressing an untapped IT resource," says Collins.

Arizona has become an early pioneer in blockchain, with [laws on the books](#) recognizing smart contracts and allowing companies to hold and share data on the blockchain. The technology "is the foundation for the future of high-wage employment," says State Rep. Jeff Weninger, a Republican, in [a news release](#) about Mesa Community College's program.

### **Demand for Credentials**

According to C4's Perklin, there has been "incredible demand" for certification from employers. "We regularly see multiple employees from the same company roll through our certification program in a group," he says. Some employers have "contacted us to let us know that they only hire CBPs," he adds. "One exchange even uses it as part of their applicant vetting process. If they can't get their CBP, they are not offered the job." And when Citigroup [posted job openings](#) requiring a background in bitcoin in April, the listings cited CBP as a "plus."

For employers and prospective employees alike, certification could help simplify the hiring process. But Perklin warns it is not "a silver bullet."

"Certifications often make it easy to get your foot in the door, which helps both employers and prospective candidates find each other," he says, "but it is still up to the individual candidates to prove their suitability for particular roles during their interview processes."

**Mark Toner**

Mark Toner is a Washington, D.C., writer and editor. He has covered business, technology, media, education, and healthcare for a wide range of trade and industry publications.