

Five Questions to Ask Before You Launch a Certification Program

- 1. Is certification needed?** Certification can be a complex and costly enterprise. Don't base your decision on the leanings of a vocal minority. A needs assessment is key to gauging the market's interest in credentialing.
- 2. Is the time right?** If the profession is in its infancy, does not yet have an agreed upon body of knowledge, or is highly fractionated, certification may be premature.
- 3. Is your organization the right "home" for the program?** Potential candidates and employers may not believe your organization is the right entity to sponsor the program. Instead, they may think the program should be administered by an independent entity or academic institution. Probe this issue when conducting your needs assessment.
- 4. Do the benefits justify the costs?** Before proceeding, you should be confident that the benefit to certificants and stakeholders is sufficient to justify the resources required to develop and support the program.
- 5. Would the resources be better spent on other endeavors?** If you are trying to increase the visibility of the profession, might intensive marketing and advocacy be a more effective approach? Seeking to elevate the profession or encourage professional development? Perhaps innovative, new professional development programs will better accomplish this goal.