

## **New Tool Provides Institutions with Guide to Plan and Implement Competency-Based Education Programs**

*The Competency-Based Education Network provides institutions with research-based recommendations for building and scaling competency-based degree programs*

**June 23, 2016**—[The Competency-Based Education Network \(C-BEN\)](#) today released an interactive [CBE Design Planner](#) tool that allows institutions to plan for designing, developing and scaling high-quality competency-based education (CBE) programs capable of serving students of all backgrounds. The tool is the latest resource developed by C-BEN, which serves a network of institutions as they create and offer degree programs with well-defined learning outcomes and rigorous assessment.

“C-BEN listened to its members and developed a research-based tool to plan for and introduce competency-based education degrees with long-term success in mind,” said Laurie Dodge, C-BEN chair and vice provost and vice chancellor of Brandman University. “The CBE Design Planner is a powerful tool that will guide institutions through the elements that are key to creating a quality CBE program that can be scaled to meet the needs of today’s student.”

The CBE Design Planner is built on the Shared Design Elements released in 2015. The tool demonstrates emerging practices in the field and will be used to disseminate new learning. Updates will be incorporated to share evidence about institutions’ learnings and to reflect outcomes from case studies. The CBE Design Planner is a four-phase design model, consisting of:

- **Planning phase:** One of the earliest and biggest challenges an institution faces in this stage is creating an agreed upon definition of CBE. During this stage, the foundations of the CBE program must be determined and the necessary staff and technology resources must be harnessed to carry out the plan. Time is spent developing the competency-based curriculum during this phase.
- **Start-up phase:** In this second stage, necessary approvals to offer a program must be achieved. If a direct assessment program is built, the process requires approval from the institution, regional accreditor and U.S. Department of Education. Marketing to and recruitment of learners begins during this stage.
- **Implementation phase:** In this third phase, students enroll in the CBE program. With the program operational, its effectiveness must be assessed and quality assurance and continuous improvement processes begin.
- **Scale-up phase:** In this final phase, the program reaches its maturity. At this point, a focus may be placed on scaling to the desired number of students, or on replicating the CBE format in other areas of study, thus expanding CBE offerings.

“Although there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to CBE, the CBE Design Planner helps to set realistic expectations for campus leaders for the human and financial investments necessary to develop a viable and successful CBE degree program that meets students’ needs,” said Charla Long, executive director of C-BEN. “The planner guides campus leaders from early stage efforts through scalability once successes are achieved. C-BEN members have learned what works and what doesn’t and the CBE Planner puts guiding questions, resources and information in the hands of campus practitioners and senior leaders.”

Specific CBE content areas researched by C-BEN and included in the CBE Design Planner include: clear, cross-cutting and specialized competencies; coherent, competency-driven program and curriculum design; embedded process for continuous improvement; enabling and aligned business processes and systems; engaged faculty and external partners; flexible staffing roles and structures; learner centered programs; measurable and meaningful assessments; new or adjusted financial models; and proficient and prepared graduates.

The precursor to the CBE Planner was shown at CBExchange 2015, with attendees, campus practitioners and industry experts participating in the final design.

The Planner can be accessed at: <http://cbdesignplanner.org> and information on CBExchange 2016 is available at: <http://cbexchange.org>

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**About the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN)** The Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) is a group of regionally accredited two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities working together to address shared challenges to designing, developing and scaling high-quality CBE programs. C-BEN institutions have developed or are developing affordable, high-quality CBE programs capable of serving many more students of all backgrounds. Additionally, member institutions are offering or will offer programs with well-defined learning outcomes and rigorous assessments. The C-BEN Board of Directors, comprising innovators from several participating institutions, guides the work to provide an evidence-based approach to advancing CBE across the country.

*C-BEN can be found online at [CBENetwork.org](http://CBENetwork.org) and on Twitter at [@CBENetwork](https://twitter.com/CBENetwork).*