

NERC

NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC
RELIABILITY CORPORATION

Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual

Version 4.6

June 1, 2020

RELIABILITY | RESILIENCE | SECURITY



3353 Peachtree Road NE
Suite 600, North Tower
Atlanta, GA 30326
404-446-2560 | www.nerc.com

Table of Contents

Preface.....	iv
Chapter 1: Credential Maintenance Program Manual Overview.....	1
1.1 Manual Purpose & Objectives	1
Chapter 2: NERC Credential Maintenance Program Overview	2
2.1 Program Purpose and Objectives	2
2.2 Scope.....	2
2.3 Governance.....	3
2.4 Administration	3
2.5 Funding	3
Chapter 3: NERC Continuing Education Providers.....	4
3.1 Types of Providers.....	4
Level 1 Transcript Reviewer	4
Level 2 ILA Provider	4
Level 3 NERC CE Provider	6
Advertising ILAs and Provider Status	7
Sponsors	8
Chapter 4: Continuing Education Learning Activities	9
4.1 Continuing Education Hours	9
4.2 Types of Learning Activities	9
4.3 Determining the Total CEHs for Eligible Learning Activities	10
4.4 Criteria for Learning Activities	12
4.5 Learning Objectives.....	12
4.6 Plan and Content	13
4.7 Delivery	13
4.8 Instructional Delivery Team.....	13
4.9 Learning Assessments.....	14
4.10 Proctoring/Assessment Integrity	15
4.11 Learning Activity Evaluation and Feedback	16
4.12 Self-Study Learning Activities.....	17
4.13 On-the-Job Training Learning Activities.....	18
4.14 BUCC Learning Activities	19
4.15 Field, Facility, or Site Visit Learning Activities.....	19
4.16 Compliance with the NERC Credential Maintenance Program Criteria.....	20

Chapter 5: Submitting Learning Activity Applications 21

 5.1 The ILA Form 21

 5.2 Submission Time Frame Requirements 21

 5.3 Renewal of ILAs 21

Chapter 6: Course Approval and Awarding CEHs 23

 6.1 Course Approval 23

 6.2 Awarding of CEHs 23

Chapter 7: Continuing Education Review Panel 24

 7.1 Continuing Education Review Panel 24

 7.2 Course Review and Approval Process 24

 7.3 Reporting to the CMWG 24

Chapter 8: Continuing Education Learning Activity Audits 25

 8.1 Types of Audits 25

 8.2 Audit Requirements 25

 8.3 Audit Results 25

 8.4 Audit Oversight 26

Appendix A: Summary of Program Time Frames 28

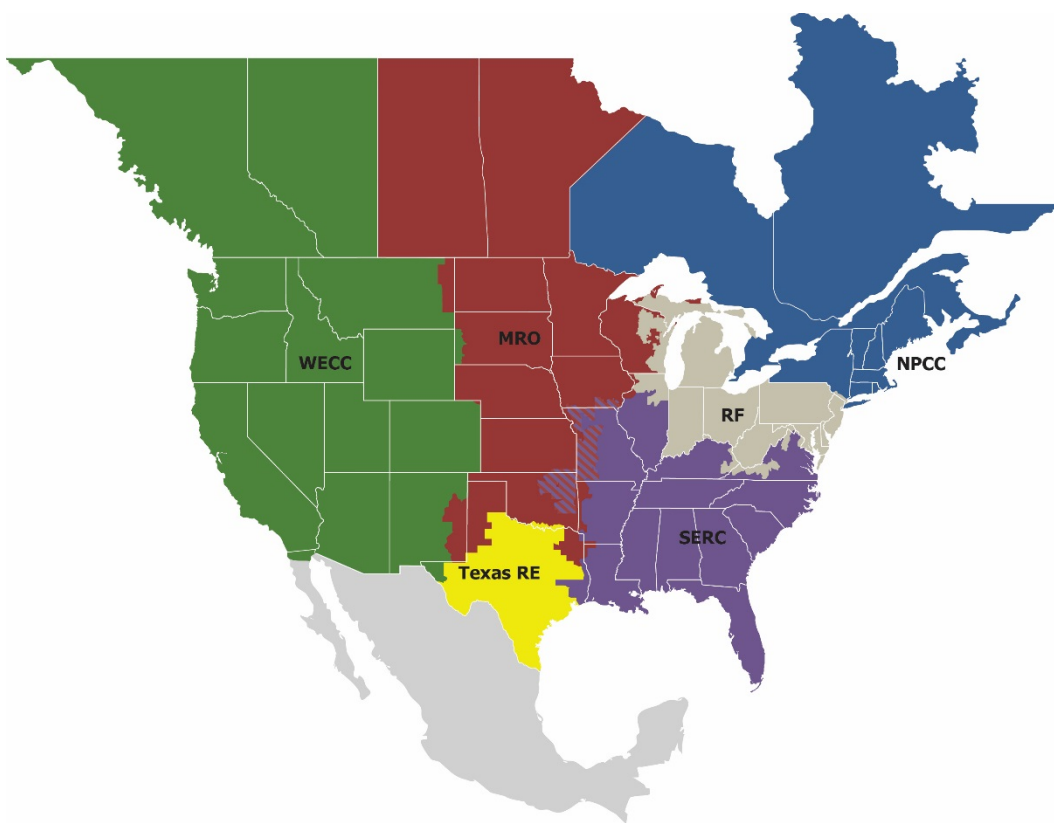
Appendix B: Revision History 29

Preface

Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and the Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) Enterprise serves to strengthen that fabric. The vision for the ERO Enterprise, which is comprised of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and the six Regional Entities (REs), is a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system (BPS). Our mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.

Reliability | Resilience | Security
Because nearly 400 million citizens in North America are counting on us

The North American BPS is divided into six RE boundaries as shown in the map and corresponding table below. The multicolored area denotes overlap as some load-serving entities participate in one Region while associated Transmission Owners/Operators participate in another.



MRO	Midwest Reliability Organization
NPCC	Northeast Power Coordinating Council
RF	ReliabilityFirst
SERC	SERC Reliability Corporation
Texas RE	Texas Reliability Entity
WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council

Chapter 1: Credential Maintenance Program Manual Overview

NERC recognizes the importance of electric reliability and encourages system operating personnel to maintain and expand their professional knowledge bases to stay current on new developments. NERC also recognizes the need to track such efforts for the maintenance of NERC BPS operating personnel credentials, as defined in the System Operator Certification (SOC) Program Manual found on the [NERC SOC web page](#). The NERC Credential Maintenance Program, as stated in the NERC Rules of Procedure section 902, provides a framework for the development and tracking of high-quality learning activities that qualify for continuing education hours (CEHs).

1.1 Manual Purpose & Objectives

- Provide an overview of the scope and purpose of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program
- Provide the process for becoming a NERC Continuing Education (CE) Provider
- Describe the process for granting CE Providers the responsibility to award CEHs
- Establish requirements for the renewal and maintenance of the NERC-approved provider status
- Define the criteria a training event must meet to be approvable as a CE learning activity
- Provide direction for the application process to obtain approval for training activities
- Provide direction for renewing approved training activities

Chapter 2: NERC Credential Maintenance Program Overview

NERC's Credential Maintenance Program consists of criteria for planned educational activities intended to further develop and train BPS operating personnel and to enhance the knowledge and skills they require for the reliable operation of the Bulk Electric System (BES) within North America.

The Credential Maintenance Program is based on recognized standards that ensure high-quality learning activities. Though NERC is not a member of the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET), the NERC Credential Maintenance Program is based on many of IACET's criteria and guidelines.

2.1 Program Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program is to establish and maintain criteria that recognize, promote, and encourage quality, up-to-date learning activities for BPS operating personnel. Fulfilling these objectives ensures that BPS operating personnel working in North America:

- Are trained, equipped, and prepared to maintain electric reliability.
- Are able to use the approved learning activities to maintain their NERC certification credentials.

The objectives of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program are to:

- Encourage the development of learning activities that qualify as NERC-approved activities.
- Provide guidance to training organizations as they develop and improve learning activities.
- Ensure all learning activities are developed and delivered according to program criteria.
- Ensure BPS operating personnel have access to approved learning activities.
- Encourage the development of a network of approved CE Providers for the overall enhancement of system operating personnel and electric reliability in North America.

2.2 Scope

The NERC Credential Maintenance Program focuses on the training and education needs of BPS operating personnel and may include a wide range of topics and activities. These training activities may come from a variety of sources, including professional association meetings and seminars, vendor-sponsored technical workshop, company-specific task lists, and programs that provide a wide range of topics.

BPS operating personnel continuing education includes updates, extended or advanced training, activities on operating topics, tools, applications, and refresher training. Any learning activity can be submitted for approval under the program, but all proposed learning activities must meet NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria and training topics recognized by the NERC SOC to qualify as approved CE activities.

NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria includes:

- Requirements and responsibilities of providers
- Requirements for learning activities
- Requirements for documentation of learning activities
- Requirements for course audits

2.3 Governance

The Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC) determines the content to be used in system operator credential maintenance. This content is defined in the SOC Manual, Appendix A – Recognized Operator Training Topics. This manual is located on the [NERC System Operator web page](#).

The Credential Maintenance Working Group (CMWG) works with the PCGC to determine the process for reviewing and approving whether a learning activity meets the Credential Maintenance Program criteria and can be approved for CEHs. The CMWG serves as the governing body of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program. As such, the working group establishes policies, provides input on fees for CE Providers and learning activities, and monitors the performance of the Credential Maintenance Program.

Members of the CMWG appoint nominees to serve as reviewers on the Continuing Education Review Panel (CERP). Once the reviewers are trained on the Credential Maintenance Program processes, they assist the administrator of the Credential Maintenance Program by:

1. Reviewing and evaluating applications submitted by the providers of learning activities, and
2. Auditing approved learning activities.

2.4 Administration

NERC staff administers the Credential Maintenance Program; collects fees; maintains databases, records, and applications; and reports to the CMWG on the activities of CERP and the performance of the approved CE Providers.

As the administrator, NERC staff works with the CMWG to establish clear and concise requirements for approved learning activities, processes, and procedures that enable system operating personnel to use their CEHs to maintain their NERC Certification credentials.

2.5 Funding

The program is funded through user fees. The CMWG ensures the program is financially equitable to all parties. Refer to the [fee schedule](#) posted on the NERC web site for specific fees.

Chapter 3: NERC Continuing Education Providers

If approved, NERC, REs, operating and marketing entities (including those that employ BPS operating personnel), technical and industry societies and associations, consultants, vendors, colleges, universities, and training companies can become NERC CE Providers.

Refer to the reference videos and/or user guide for step-by-step instructions on applying to become a provider. These resources are available in the [System Operator Certification and Continuing Education Database \(SOCCED\) Support Help Center](#).

3.1 Types of Providers

The NERC Credential Maintenance Program recognizes three roles:

1. Level 1 Transcript Reviewer
2. Level 2 Individual Learning Activity (ILA) Provider
3. Level 3 NERC Continuing Education (CE) Provider

Level 1 Transcript Reviewer

A Level 1 Transcript Reviewer is a role that allows an entity to establish a SOCCED account for the purpose of reviewing transcripts to which a system operator has granted them access. A Level 1 Transcript Reviewer may not submit courses or upload course information to operator transcripts. There is no evaluation of the entity for this role. A Level 1 Transcript Reviewer status is valid for 12 consecutive months and may be renewed once during the 12 consecutive month period.

Level 2 ILA Provider

The Level 2 ILA Provider requirements:

1. New provider applicants must complete a provider application designed to gather general background information as well as information regarding the types of programs the applicant expects to offer as a CE Provider.
2. The applicant will provide the following information:
 - a. A summary of the trainer(s) instructional capabilities and operations knowledge and experience.
 - b. A description of the applicant's knowledge of the requirements for the NERC Credential Maintenance program and relevant NERC standards.
 - c. A description of the Systematic Approach to Training (SAT) model that the applicant employs to plan and deliver training.
3. The Provider Task Force will evaluate the application and may request a conference call with the applicant.
 - a. The Provider Task Force may consist of at least two of the following:
 - i. A member of the NERC CMWG
 - ii. A member of CERP
 - iii. The NERC Credential Maintenance Program Coordinator
 - b. The Provider Task Force will assess the applicant's ability to successfully perform the requirements associated with the NERC Credential Maintenance program.

4. The Level 2 ILA Provider status is valid for 12 consecutive months and may be renewed during the 12 consecutive month period.
 - a. Since each course is reviewed and approved prior to delivery for the Level 2 ILA Provider, the renewal of the provider status does not require a course evaluation.
 - b. The Level 2 ILA Provider must renew their status on or before the expiration date or their account will become inactive.
5. A Level 2 ILA Provider submits a separate ILA Application for each learning activity and must receive NERC approval prior to training delivery.

Level 2 ILA Provider responsibilities include:

1. Uploading all transcripts to NERC within 60 calendar days of the delivery/roster date of any learning activity.
2. Ensuring their courses conform to the NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria.
3. Maintaining documentation for each course, including:
 - a. Maintain accurate records of all participants:
 - i. Rosters must include the following:
 - (1) NERC course identification
 - (2) Delivery dates
 - (3) The names of the participants
 - (4) The NERC certificate numbers for the attendees with certification credentials
 - b. Learning content
 - i. Copies of all training materials used to deliver learning activities
 - ii. All documents supporting simulation exercises and scenarios
 - c. Assessments
 - i. Summaries or copies of all learning assessments and a sample of the assessment tool used
 - ii. Copies of all performance evaluations, checklists, or other documents supporting drills and simulations
 - d. Evaluations
 - i. Summaries or copies of all course evaluations (student feedback) including comments received
 - e. Documentation retention requirements
 - i. Maintain accurate and complete records of all learning activities, training materials, and all other supporting documents used in the approval or delivery of learning activities for a minimum of four years. Electronic records are acceptable.
4. All providers must notify NERC in writing or by updating provider account information in SOCCED in the event of any of the following:
 - a. Change in provider address
 - b. Request to withdraw provider status (no refunds of fees will be made)
 - c. Dissolution of provider organization or cessation of continuing education activities

- d. Change in provider primary user
 - e. Mergers of provider organizations
5. Providers must keep their SOCCED accounts up to date and accurate at all times.

Level 3 NERC CE Provider

All new providers must remain a Level 2 ILA Provider for one year. During the renewal process, a Level 2 ILA Provider may choose to become a Level 3 NERC CE Provider as long as they meet the criteria. New Level 3 NERC CE Provider applicants must have submitted and received approval for at least three courses during the previous year. Of the courses submitted by the applicant, at least one must have passed a Level 2 Audit during the previous year.

Application and maintenance of a Level 3 CE Provider status is contingent upon the entity's successful participation in the NERC Credential Maintenance Program and compliance with the program criteria. The Level 3 NERC CE Provider status is valid for three years and may be renewed every three years.

To renew a Level 3 NERC CE Provider status:

1. The entity must initiate a renewal request in SOCCED.
2. The entity must have three active courses in SOCCED at the time of the renewal request.
 - a. At least one of the entity's courses must have passed a Level 2 Audit during the previous year.
3. The Level 3 NERC CE Provider has a grace period of up to 90 days following the expiration date to renew their provider status. However, courses cannot be submitted until the account is renewed.

Level 3 NERC CE Provider status benefits:

1. The option to deliver just-in-time training on urgent issues prior to the submittal of ILAs.
2. Courses may be generated in SOCCED up to 30 days after the listed start date.
3. Transcripts may be submitted to SOCCED up to 60 days after the delivery/roster date.

Limitations on Level 3 NERC CE Provider endorsements:

1. The Level 3 NERC CE Provider status relates only to the provider's learning activities, not to the endorsement of any product or commercial enterprise.
2. The Level 3 NERC CE Provider status does not grant authority to any provider to approve learning activities on behalf of any outside institutions or groups.

Level 3 NERC CE Provider responsibilities include:

1. Uploading all transcripts to SOCCED within 60 calendar days of the delivery/roster date of any learning activity or approval of the learning activity (whichever occurs last).
2. Ensuring their courses conform to the NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria.
3. Maintaining documentation for each course, including:
 - a. Maintain accurate records of all participants:
 - i. Rosters must include the following:
 - (1) NERC course identification

- (2) Delivery dates
 - (3) The names of the participants
 - (4) The NERC certificate numbers for the attendees with certification credentials
- b. Learning content
 - i. Copies of all training materials used to deliver learning activities
 - ii. All documents supporting simulation exercises and scenarios
- c. Assessments
 - i. Summaries or copies of all learning assessments and a sample of the assessment tool used
 - ii. Copies of all performance evaluations, checklists, or other documents supporting drills and simulations
- d. Evaluations
 - i. Summaries or copies of all course evaluations (student feedback) including comments received
- e. Documentation retention requirements
 - i. Maintain accurate and complete records of all learning activities, training materials, and all other supporting documents used in the approval or delivery of learning activities for a minimum of four years. Electronic records are acceptable.
4. All providers must notify NERC in writing or by updating provider account information in the SOCCED in the event of any of the following:
 - a. Change in provider address
 - b. Request to withdraw provider status (no refunds of fees will be made)
 - c. Dissolution of provider organization or cessation of continuing education activities
 - d. Change in provider primary user
 - e. Mergers of provider organizations
5. Providers must keep their SOCCED accounts up to date and accurate at all times.

Advertising ILAs and Provider Status

1. Level 2 ILA Providers and Level 3 NERC CE Providers may use the NERC logo to advertise its status as a NERC-approved provider or to advertise a particular NERC-approved learning activity. The NERC logo may not be used for any other purpose. A provider's status may be revoked if it misuses or alters the NERC logo.
2. A provider may advertise as a Level 3 NERC CE Provider only after NERC has granted this designation.
 - a. When a provider advertises an approved provider status in promotional materials such as advertisements, brochures, and announcements, it must include the following statement:
 - i. "[Provider's name and NERC ID number] is recognized by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation as a continuing education provider that adheres to NERC Credential Maintenance Program Criteria."
3. A provider may advertise a course or learning activity as a NERC-approved continuing education learning activity only after NERC has granted this designation.

- a. When a provider advertises its NERC-approved learning activity in promotional materials such as advertisements, brochures, and announcements, it must include the following statement:
 - i. “[The activity name and ID] is recognized by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation as an approved learning activity for which NERC CEHs can be awarded, and [provider name] adheres to Credential Maintenance Program Criteria.”
4. A provider may use the NERC logo when advertising its learning curriculum or any NERC-approved course or learning activity. The NERC logo may not be altered or made part of another element of the provider’s advertisement.
 - a. Approved providers may request a copy of the NERC logo by sending an email to SOCCEDSupport@nerc.net.

Sponsors

An entity, acting as a sponsor of learning activities approved under the NERC Credential Maintenance Program, may secure the services of other entities or NERC CE Providers by contract or by informal agreement to assist with the development, delivery, and evaluation of the learning activities.

If a sponsor submits an ILA for approval of a learning activity, the sponsor is responsible for ensuring the activity meets all NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria for awarding CEHs.

The sponsor cannot delegate total or partial responsibility for the learning activity. The provider that meets the Credential Maintenance CE Program’s criteria must be the provider that submits the ILA for approval.

Also, attendees must know which provider is responsible for meeting all criteria so that they know whom to contact with problems or questions about their attendance records.

Responsibilities of the sponsor:

1. A sponsor must notify attendees and NERC if any special arrangements for awarding CEHs after the completion of each learning activity have been made with an approved provider.
2. Attendees must know who awards the CEHs for the completion of each learning activity.
3. Sponsors must have an active SOCCEd account and be approved as either a Level 2 ILA Provider or a Level 3 NERC CE Provider.

Chapter 4: Continuing Education Learning Activities

The NERC Credential Maintenance Program recognizes many types of activities that meet the criteria of approved learning activities, including individual, group, physical, and electronic activities. The common element of any type of learning activity is that it is a structured learning activity that conforms to all NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria, including the recognized operator training topics found in the [SOC Program Manual, Appendix A](#).

4.1 Continuing Education Hours

1. A CEH is defined as a clock-hour measurement that:
 - a. Is awarded to individuals for participation in a NERC-approved learning activity that is based on concise learning objectives consistent with NERC Credential Maintenance program criteria.
 - b. Requires the participant to demonstrate the achievement of learning objectives.
2. CEH Categories or Types:
 - a. According to the SOC Program Manual, system operator credential maintenance must contain a specific number of CEHs in the following categories. Details on these requirements can be found in the SOC Program Manual on the [NERC SOC web page](#).
 - i. Operating CEHs
 - ii. NERC standards
 - iii. Simulation-based training
 - b. Standards training should focus on the content or implementation of NERC standards currently in effect. If Standards hours are requested, the NERC standards addressed in the learning activity should be listed.
 - c. Simulations can include tabletop exercises, operator training simulators, emergency drills, or the practice of emergency procedures, restoration, blackstart, or other reliability-related scenarios.

4.2 Types of Learning Activities

1. Types of learning activities that are eligible under the Credential Maintenance Program include:
 - a. Workshop
 - b. Traditional classroom activities
 - c. Conferences
 - d. Seminars
 - e. In-house training curricula
 - f. Structured self-study activities
 - g. Online and distance-learning activities
 - h. Operator training simulations
 - i. Computer-based training activities
2. A learning activity may not qualify for approval or will result in a reduction of CEHs awarded if the learning activity:

- a. Missing one or more required components specified by the NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria as laid out in this document.
- b. Includes unstructured self-study or other forms of independent learning that are not subject to demonstrating the achievement of learning objectives. Self-study learning activities that require only the reading of general professional literature, publications, or reference manuals followed by a test are not acceptable.
- c. Includes time allocated to events such as social activities, greetings, luncheons, receptions, and dinners.
- d. Includes preparation time allotted to participants.
- e. Includes committee or staff meetings that accompany training activities.
- f. Includes times when no demonstrable learning takes place (e.g., in the case of the Backup Control Center (BUCC) exercises, time spent traveling from one facility to another).

4.3 Determining the Total CEHs for Eligible Learning Activities

1. Calculating the CEH total for in-person activities
 - a. One CEH is equivalent to one contact hour (60 minutes) of participation in an organized learning activity in a classroom-style environment. One contact hour may include allowance for breaks. The maximum break time is 10 minutes for each contact hour, or the equivalent for each sequential hour. Break times are assumed to be included in the request for CEHs unless otherwise specified.
 - b. Classroom-style environments include the presentation, discussion, and testing of material within a controlled time frame in which there is direct interaction between the participant and the instructor.
 - c. CEHs are not allowed for any ILA or any multiple segment learning activity that is less than one contact hour. CEHs are assigned based on the total duration of the learning activity completed with fractional increments of an hour rounded down to the next whole or half hour with a one-hour minimum.
 - d. The NERC administrator, in coordination with the provider and the reviewer, will determine the total number of CEHs awarded for a learning activity during the application review process.
 - e. The provider will award CEHs based on the successful participation of an individual in a NERC-approved learning activity.
2. Calculating the CEH total for self-study activities
 - a. Non-classroom learning activities, including structured self-study or computer-based instruction, may be counted if they meet all of the Credential Maintenance Program's criteria.
 - b. CEHs may be assigned based on hours earned if the training is delivered with similar classroom-style elements.
 - c. When there is no classroom equivalent, documentation of pilot testing will be used to determine CEH assignments.
 - i. CEHs for some self-study learning activities must be based on a pilot test average completion time. The time frame required to complete the self-study curriculum will vary among learners. To determine the appropriate number of CEHs to be awarded for self-study, the curriculum must be pilot tested on a comparable group of learners (minimum five people).
 - ii. Personnel who participate in the pilot delivery of training activities may earn CEHs for the activity if no significant changes are required following the pilot. CEHs shall be earned in the amount that is determined for the activity through the pilot process.

- iii. CEHs may not be awarded through piloting when learning activities undergo substantive changes after the piloting, such as adding objectives or making significant changes to the content. If substantive changes are made, the activity will require additional piloting to determine the appropriate CEHs to be awarded. CEHs awarded will be based on the approved application.
 - iv. The following, or an equivalent recognized method, shall be used to determine the CEHs for a self-study activity:
 - (1) A sample of participants comparable to the intended audience must be selected to pilot learning activity materials in an environment and manner similar to that in which the learning activity will be presented. The sample group must be independent of the learning activity development group and must possess a level of knowledge consistent with the intended participants of the learning activity.
 - (2) Record completion date and times for each participant. For widely divergent completion times, a provider may remove the high and low values and average the remainder, as long as there are at least five independent values to average. Assignment of CEHs is based upon the average of the pilot times with fractional increments of an hour rounded down to the next whole or half hour with a one-hour minimum.
 - (3) If substantive changes are subsequently made to the learning activity materials, additional field testing of the revised learning activity materials should be conducted to confirm or amend the average completion time.
 - (4) The original sample group may be used if additional piloting is required.
 - v. Pilot test documentation must include:
 - (1) At least five pilot participants' names;
 - (2) Documentation from each pilot participant showing the amount of time it took for them to complete the learning activity or;
 - (3) Documented proof of piloting from a vendor; and
 - (4) A sample template for pilot documentation is available in the resources section of the [SOCCED Support Help Center](#),
 - d. Set run-time activities.
 - i. Set run-time activities are created in an e-learning format, and content is auto-advanced with an established minimum time for completing the activity. The minimum time is the length of time it takes to run the activity from start to finish without interruptions. CEHs are awarded based on the minimum run times for these activities.
3. Awarding partial credit
- a. For learning activities in which part-time participation is permitted, the provider will describe how partial credit will be addressed in terms of verifying attendance and the completion of the participant's assessment.
 - b. The provider shall provide documentation to the trainees that states the number of CEHs awarded for completing the learning activity and the applicable subject areas or segments.
 - c. Each segment completed for partial credit must meet all of the program's criteria as if it were a stand-alone learning activity. Likewise, the provider shall maintain all records of any partially completed learning activity as if it were a complete learning activity.

- d. The actual number of CEHs awarded for a partially completed learning activity must be at least one full CEH but less than the total that would have been awarded if the entire learning activity had been completed.
 - e. Trainees must be notified of the method used to determine and to award partial credit for a learning activity.
4. The NERC Credential Maintenance Program may recognize the time spent on the assessment of a trainee's accomplishment of the stated learning objectives. However, learning assessments can be included in CEHs only if they are integral parts of the learning process and are being used as instructional aids.
- a. The provider shall justify the inclusion of the assessment time based on information submitted in the training plan that details how the assessment time of a learning activity is an integral part of the learning process.
 - b. This justification shall be described in detail on the ILA application submitted to NERC for approval. If approved by NERC, assessment times can be used as part of the total CEH calculation of a learning activity.
 - c. Providers can evaluate skills or knowledge concurrently with the training through simulations or in-class activities that allow trainees to demonstrate instructed skills. Typically, this method of assessment is included in the calculation of the CEHs.
 - d. Tests administered before and after training can be used to measure the acquisition of knowledge and information. Written or online tests are not included in the calculation of the CEHs; however, time spent reviewing the correct answers on an exam can be included in the calculation of CEHs.

4.4 Criteria for Learning Activities

1. Seven key elements must be included in the ILA submitted for approval as a learning activity. All proposed learning activities must contain the following key elements to receive approval status:
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Plan
 - c. Content
 - d. Delivery
 - e. Instructional Delivery Team
 - f. Learning Assessment
 - g. Learning Activity Evaluation and Feedback
2. Identify the Target Audience
 - a. Providers should develop and conduct learning activities in a manner consistent with the prerequisite education, experience, or advanced preparation of the intended participants.
 - b. To the best of their abilities, providers should supply learning activity content and levels consistent with the backgrounds of the intended participants. Providers of learning activities must clearly identify the prerequisite training experience or advanced preparation, if any, in precise language so that potential participants can readily ascertain whether the learning activity is appropriate for their needs.

4.5 Learning Objectives

1. All approved learning activities must be based on relevant learning objectives and have measurable outcomes achievable by participants. On-the-Job Training (OJT), field visits, and BUCC drills are considered

specialized learning activities. These activities must also meet NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria for approved learning activities.

2. Each learning activity must have clear and concise written statements of learning objectives. These objectives represent what trainees are expected to achieve as a result of completing the learning activity. Objectives must be measurable and observable for the selected method of assessment.
 - a. Refer to the “Guide to Writing Learning Objectives” in the resources section of the SOCCED Support Help Center.
3. Learning activities offered by providers for the benefit of system operations personnel must align the objectives, content, delivery methods and assessment methodology. Doing so allows potential participants to determine whether the learning activities are appropriate for their professional development needs.

4.6 Plan and Content

1. Plan
 - a. There must be a schedule or statement of how the training will be structured for the successful completion of stated learning objectives.
2. Content
 - a. There must be an outline or brief description of the information conveyed in each segment of the learning activity. The content must be consistent with the learning objectives.
 - b. Providers must ensure that practical exercises, materials, and delivery systems are current, technically accurate, and effectively designed.
 - c. To best facilitate the learning process, learning activity materials must be planned, developed, presented in accordance with the learning objectives, and kept current. Providers must review the instructional materials periodically to ensure they are accurate and consistent with currently accepted industry practices and recognized policies and standards that relate to the learning activity subject matter. When submitting applications, the provider will indicate whether he or she uses a systematic approach to training.

4.7 Delivery

1. There must be a description of the training methods used to accomplish the learning objectives. The training methods used for each segment of the learning activity must be clearly identified. The selection and use of delivery methods should be consistent with the learning objectives and content.
2. Providers must ensure that the instructional methods employed are appropriate for the learning activities. Learning activities should be presented in a manner consistent with the learning objectives and the descriptive or technical material provided.
3. Providers should select instructional methods that are suitable considering the training goals, backgrounds, number of intended participants, and the facilities and technologies employed in the delivery of the learning activities.

4.8 Instructional Delivery Team

1. Providers must ensure the training team is knowledgeable in the subject matter related to the learning activity.
 - a. Individuals or teams with expertise in the subject matter must develop the learning activities. Expertise may be demonstrated through practical experience or education. A subject matter expert

- (SME) is a person who can successfully present a learning activity, who can answer trainee questions during the delivery of a learning activity, and who is knowledgeable in the content area of the learning activity being delivered.
- b. Individuals or teams with expertise in instructional design and development are also necessary for the development and delivery of learning activities. Instructional and technical SMEs need to work together to create quality learning activities. It is the responsibility of the instructional team to ensure the criteria outlined in this manual are met.
2. Providers of self-study learning activities must be knowledgeable in the subject matter and have expertise in the development and delivery of such modes of training.
 - a. A provider of self-study learning activities must have expertise in the specific subject area related to the self-study. In addition, the provider must have the technical resources available to maintain the delivery system if the activity is delivered electronically.
 - b. A provider of self-study learning activities should also have expertise in the development of asynchronous learning.
 3. Providers must ensure their instructors are qualified in the learning activity content and instructional methods used.
 - a. Instructors are key components of the learning process for any group learning activity. Therefore, it is imperative that providers exercise great care in selecting qualified instructors for all group-learning activities. Qualified instructors are capable and have thorough training, education, or experience in communicating effectively and providing an environment conducive to learning. They should be competent and up to date regarding the subject matter, skilled in the appropriate instructional methods and technology, and prepared.

4.9 Learning Assessments

1. The learning assessment measures the extent to which the training achieved its objectives and improved the learner's knowledge or skills.
2. A number of assessment tools can be designed to measure what trainees have learned during a learning activity. Regardless of the method used, any assessment method must relate directly to the learning objectives to measure their achievement.
3. Types of learning assessments
 - a. Testing measures whether the trainee can provide evidence or demonstrate that he or she has learned what was intended in the stated learning objectives.
 - b. Providers can evaluate skills or knowledge concurrently with the training through simulations or in-class activities that allow trainees to demonstrate instructed skills. This method of assessment is typically included in the calculation of the CEHs. The assessment must measure group and individual performance.
 - c. Performance assessments are another method of assessing whether the trainee has accomplished the learning objectives.
4. Learning assessments must contain the following criteria:
 - a. Specify a passing score (or an equivalent) that represents the level of knowledge or performance required to successfully accomplish the associated tasks.
 - b. Be based entirely on the subject matter delivered and directly related to the stated learning objectives.

- c. Be specified at the start of the learning activity.
 - d. Ensure that the individuals performing within a group are assessed on their roles within the group.
 - e. Allow open-book assessments only if the learner is required to locate information.
 - f. Include the criteria for successful performance and validate individual achievement of learning objectives.
5. OJT assessment is not an instructional process. Its purpose is to evaluate the trainee’s skills and knowledge after the training occurs. The instructor should not coach or prompt the trainee at any time during the assessment.
- a. A performance test is a hands-on demonstration by the trainee of the knowledge and skills required to perform a task.
 - b. Performance tests should be given and evaluated by qualified OJT instructors.
 - c. The instructor shall use an evaluation standard to determine whether the trainee has successfully completed each task.
 - d. A trainee’s knowledge may be assessed prior to, during, or following task completion.
 - e. The results of the assessment should determine whether any additional practice is necessary.
 - f. There should be three distinct steps in an OJT assessment:
 - i. Brief the trainee on the manner and standards by which he or she shall be assessed.
 - ii. Conduct the assessment.
 - iii. Debrief the trainee after the assessment regarding his or her performance and any follow-up training that may be needed.
6. Retesting
- a. Retesting is permitted. The retest can have the same format, include the same topics, and have the same level of difficulty as the original test. However, at least 25% of the test items must be different, and the questions must be presented in a different order.
 - b. The learner shall not be awarded any CEHs if they fail to pass any re-assessment.

4.10 Proctoring/Assessment Integrity

1. A proctoring system requires designated proctors to supervise and administer various assessments throughout self-study learning activities. The intent is to ensure academic integrity during assessments by verifying that the person completing an assessment follows all necessary guidelines and is actually the individual earning CEHs for the learning activity.
 - a. Designated proctors must be instructed in their roles and responsibilities. Proctors must follow a written set of guidelines. Learners must also be given—or informed of—the proctor’s roles and responsibilities.
 - b. It is the learner’s responsibility to coordinate times to meet with a proctor for a scheduled exam or assignment. Once a learner registers for a course that requires proctoring, he or she shall be informed that a proctor is needed.
 - c. The following are additional criteria that must be followed when any learning activity requires proctoring:

- i. Proctoring must document that the person doing the work is the person who will receive credit for successful completion of the learning activity.
- ii. The proctor shall have access to all assessments and other relevant materials required to administer the assessments.
- iii. The proctor does not need to be a subject matter expert for the learning activity being delivered.
- iv. The proctor shall have a list of personnel who can assist with questions that arise during an assessment.
- v. The proctor does not need to be present for all of the learning activity; however, the proctor must attest that the learner doing the assessment is the person who will be awarded the CEHs for the successful completion of the learning activity.
- vi. The proctor will verify attendance by name, NERC certificate number, and a government or company-issued picture ID before the final assessment begins.
- vii. A learner's unique login and password may substitute as a method for verifying attendance for computer-based or online courses.
- viii. Proctoring can be accomplished through the use of a learning contract between the provider (instructor) and the learner, if physical proctoring is not a viable option (as is the case for training through virtual classrooms or webinars).
- ix. Learning contracts must be signed by the provider and learner before the commencement of a learning activity that requires proctoring.

2. Learning contracts

- a. Learning contracts are agreements between a provider, or teaching team, and a learner (or a group of learners). One of the primary issues is ensuring the integrity of the learning activity; both the learning activity content and the exams must be completed solely by the learner without external assistance.
- b. The contract should specify:
 - i. The nature of the self-study learning activity and the time frame over which it is to be completed.
 - ii. That the output is consistent with the NERC Credential Maintenance Program's criteria for learning objectives, evaluations, and proofs of completion.
 - iii. The maximum number of CEHs that will be awarded for the self-study learning activity; it will limit the CEHs awarded to the amount contained in the approved learning activity application.
- c. An example of a learning contract is available in the resource section of the SOCCED Support Help Center.

4.11 Learning Activity Evaluation and Feedback

1. A curriculum (learning activity) evaluation gathers feedback from participants regarding their perceptions of a learning activity's effectiveness. It also seeks their input to increase the effectiveness of subsequent deliveries of the learning activity.
 - a. Evaluations, whether written or electronic, should be solicited from participants and instructors for each learning activity session (including self-study) to determine whether measures specific to the training activities are achieved.

2. CE Providers should review evaluation results to assess learning activity effectiveness and to inform developers and instructors of the evaluation results. Providers are expected to consider these results during the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of future training activities.

4.12 Self-Study Learning Activities

1. If offering self-study learning activities, the provider must have sufficient staff resources to fulfill its obligations to support users of such learning activities.
2. Providers must indicate they have a process, procedure, or identified method used to ensure that the person awarded the CEH does the work.
3. Self-study learning activities may be either self-paced or have a set run time.
4. Self-study learning activities must employ an established methodology that clearly defines learning objectives, guides the participant through the learning process, and provides evidence of a participant's satisfactory completion of a learning activity.
5. To guide participants through a learning process, the provider of self-study learning activities must:
 - a. Elicit participant responses to test for understanding of the material.
 - b. Offer evaluative feedback to incorrect responses.
 - c. Provide reinforcement feedback to correct responses.
6. To provide evidence of satisfactory completion of the learning activity, providers must state what method of evaluation was used to determine that a participant met the learning objectives.
 - a. These methods of evaluation may include tests or quizzes, hands-on exercises, oral examinations with written documentation, or a combination of these methods.
7. Self-study learning activities must be based on materials specifically developed for instructional use. Self-study learning activities that require only the reading of general professional literature, publications, or reference manuals followed by a test are not acceptable. However, the use of these publications as supplements to the instructional materials is allowed.
8. The process to follow for self-study learning activities includes:
 - a. Reviewing, evaluating, approving, and signing the proposed self-study learning contract, including agreeing in advance on the number of CEHs to be awarded upon successful completion.
 - b. Verifying the CEHs to be awarded by following the criteria outlined in Section 4.3 of this manual.
 - c. Collecting and retaining the signed proof of completion by the participant in the self-study learning activity as well as the documentation necessary to satisfy the requirements regarding the completion and fulfillment of learning objectives.
 - d. Providing a proctor or effectively monitoring trainees during learning assessments. Refer to Section 4.10 of this manual for more information on proctoring.
9. The provider must:
 - a. Review, evaluate, approve, and sign the proposed self-study learning contract (if appropriate), including agreeing in advance on the number of CEHs to be awarded upon successful completion.
 - b. Collect and retain signed proof of completion, as well as the documentation necessary to satisfy the requirements regarding the completion and fulfillment of the learning objectives expected of the participant in the self-study learning activity.

4.13 On-the-Job Training Learning Activities

1. OJT is structured training activities conducted in a job or simulated environment, through which trainees achieve pre-defined learning objectives.
 - a. The methods of conducting OJT and the required level of accomplishing performance assessments are determined during the development process.
 - b. The acceptable level of accomplishment (perform, simulate, discuss) should be specified in each task. Certain tasks should require that a trainee demonstrate achievement of the learning objective through actual task performance.
 - c. Performance-based OJT programs should require the use of a guide and checklists (or equivalent) to ensure consistent delivery of training and to ensure that all learning objectives are met.
2. OJT Trainer/Evaluator – Someone who conducts formal OJT and/or evaluation activities should have the ability to communicate and demonstrate to others the knowledge and skills required to competently perform a job or task.
3. OJT – This training is effective only when experienced or knowledgeable employees serve as the trainer/evaluator. Trainers/evaluators should have both the appropriate levels of competence in the tasks being taught and OJT delivery methods.
4. OJT Modules – Content and important information should be assembled in modules or guidelines. These modules guide the trainer/evaluator while he or she delivers the training, and the trainee may use these modules during and after the training. These training modules/guidelines must be developed using a systematic approach prior to delivering the training.
5. Definitions used in OJT:
 - a. Perform (P): A performance-level designation using system equipment, simulator, or laboratory to demonstrate performance of a task in accordance with the performance standards.
 - b. Simulate (S): A performance-level designation that creates a realistic representation of task performance by simulating performance while explaining the task, expected responses, and required performance standards.
 - c. Discuss (D): A performance-level designation performed through discussion of a task and required performance standards using procedures, drawings, photos, prints, or similar equipment. This option should only be used if system equipment or realistic simulation is not readily available.
 - d. An OJT Module (Guideline): A document that outlines instructor and trainee activities, learning objectives, training content, and the resources (equipment, material, etc.) necessary for the consistent conduct of training.
 - e. An OJT Checklist: A document that lists training program qualification requirements for a specific position and that is used to document OJT and performance evaluation results on a task-by-task basis. The contents of an OJT guide should be for specific tasks the student will perform on the job.
 - f. Structured OJT: Systematic approach - Job knowledge is acquired in a systematic, orderly manner by designated trainers who have been trained to deliver OJT using measurable and observable performance objectives, written material, and step-by-step procedures. Training occurs on the actual work site and equipment when possible. Training with a simulator or in a simulated environment is also acceptable.

4.14 BUCC Learning Activities

1. When planned and executed properly, exercises and drills simulating the response to emergency situations requiring evacuation of a primary control center and activating a secondary or BUCC can significantly improve preparedness. Individual-level exercises present the opportunity to orient, update, and refresh operating personnel on disaster plans and procedures. Performance-level exercises also help operating personnel improve their performance through hands-on practice and constructive critiques of their actions.
2. For a drill or exercise to be effective, system personnel should be thoroughly assessed based on stated criteria using measurable standards.
 - a. The criteria must be applicable to each drill and/or exercise.
3. Assessments must focus on the drill or exercise and meet the stated objectives.
4. Evaluations should follow the criteria outlined in Section 4.11 of this manual.
 - a. System personnel should be encouraged to share their experiences and suggest improvements to the exercise and the emergency plans being tested.
5. Providers must exclude the time needed to reach the BUCC and the time spent operating from the BUCC from the total CEHs awarded.
6. Time (used) to perform routine work normally performed by system personnel cannot be included in the calculation of total CEHs for the drill or exercise. When the Primary Control Center (PCC) turns over operations to the BUCC, training stops and operations start. When the BUCC hands control back over to the PCC, training can start again. Operating from a BUCC is considered the result of the training and is regarded as the normal course of doing the operator's job.

4.15 Field, Facility, or Site Visit Learning Activities

1. Field, facility, or site visit learning activities are valuable in initial training. However, their value is somewhat diminished for continuing education. Once a learner is able to identify a piece of equipment and its basic characteristics, little educational value is gleaned from repetitive occurrences of similar learning activities.
2. The educational value is in the learner demonstrating his or her knowledge of the impacts of the facility location, design, and operational differences on the reliability of the BPS.
3. Typically and historically, the learning assessment is a checklist, and the learner is instructed to check off each item on the list as a particular piece of equipment is located within a facility. This method of assessment does not test—or falls short of testing—whether the learner has attained an understanding or knowledge of how this equipment is operated or used during certain scenarios.
4. A thorough assessment requires an on-site proctor or instructor who verifies learning by asking a series of questions and assessing the accuracy of the response received from the learner.
5. These learning activities must be based on both learning objectives and an assessment that tests the knowledge of the reliability impacts on the BES in order to ensure educational value for the learner.
6. With this information in mind, the following requirements have been developed to ensure these types of learning activities are suitable to award CEHs through this Credential Maintenance program. Nothing about these requirements prohibits the use of field experiences or site visits that do not meet these requirements; however, CEHs must not be awarded for activities that do not meet the following and all other Credential Maintenance program criteria:
 - a. The learning activity must include a learner's workbook and an instructor's guide.

- b. The learning objectives must be based on BES reliability impacts of the differences in equipment characteristics, such as:
 - i. Location
 - ii. Equipment
 - iii. Voltage levels
 - iv. Operating characteristics
 - v. Local, sub-regional, and regional constraints
- c. The learning activity must be proctored in some manner to ensure that the learner completes all of the activity's learning objectives.
- d. The proctor is responsible for ensuring that the person awarded the CEHs is the person completing the activity.
- e. Travel time between sites visited cannot be counted in the CEH's determination.
- f. The learning assessment method must be consistent with the learning objectives.
- g. The learning assessment must be proctored.

4.16 Compliance with the NERC Credential Maintenance Program Criteria

1. Anyone who administers a NERC-approved learning activity shall comply with the following guiding principles:
 - a. There shall be an identifiable organizational unit for administering all continuing education learning activities.
 - b. There shall be review processes to ensure that NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria are met.
 - c. There shall be a system to identify a participant's satisfactory completion of an approved CE learning activity, to maintain a complete, permanent record of each participant, and to provide a copy of that record upon request.
 - d. A learning environment as well as support services shall be provided for each CE learning activity.
 - e. Knowledgeable training personnel and subject matter experts shall be involved in planning and conducting each CE learning activity.

Chapter 5: Submitting Learning Activity Applications

5.1 The ILA Form

1. When applying for NERC approval, data must be submitted through SOCCED and must include a completed ILA application, all required supporting material, and the applicable fees.
2. Providers must complete an ILA application for all learning activities for which CEHs are requested.
3. Instructions for completing an ILA application can be found in the resources section of the [SOCCED Support Help Center](#).
4. All courses submitted will be evaluated against the NERC Credential Maintenance program criteria and SOC program criteria.
 - a. Courses identified as not meeting program criteria will be evaluated by utilizing a multi-layer review process prior to denying approval.

5.2 Submission Time Frame Requirements

1. Level 2 ILA Providers must submit all learning activity applications, documentation, and fees through SOCCED at least 45 calendar days prior to the start date of the learning activity.
2. A Level 3 NERC CE Provider can submit a course to SOCCED up to 30 days after the start date of the learning activity.
3. All providers have 60 days after the delivery of the learning activity to submit transcripts to SOCCED.
4. The NERC Credential Maintenance Program must approve the ILA applications before any CEHs are awarded.

5.3 Renewal of ILAs

1. Requirements for the renewal of ILAs:
 - a. Each ILA is approved for one calendar year.
 - b. SOCCED will allow renewals up to 90 days before a learning activity's expiration date. If an ILA is submitted outside of this time frame, the provider must submit it as a new learning activity.
 - c. In order to qualify for renewal, a learning activity must be free of substantive changes from the original submission. Providers are expected to update learning activities to reflect changes such as NERC Reliability Standards and regional or local procedures.
 - d. If the learning activity has substantive changes, it cannot be renewed. Providers must then submit a new individual learning application.
2. A substantive change of an ILA means that:
 - a. One or more of the learning objectives has been modified from the learning objectives that were submitted within the original learning activity application.
 - b. The plan or schedule of how the training will be accomplished has been modified from the original application.
 - c. A change was made to allow partial attendance, if no partial attendance was marked in the original ILA.
 - d. Any content has been modified from the original ILA with the exception of utilizing new or more current data or reference material.

- e. The delivery method has been modified from the original ILA (e.g., from a classroom to a simulated drill).
 - f. The learning activity content has been changed to include items not covered by the original objectives.
 - g. The method of trainee assessment has been changed (e.g., from a written test to a skill demonstration).
 - h. The duration of the learning activity has been changed and warrants a different total number of CEHs awarded to a participating individual.
3. Automated renewal notification emails will be sent to providers 90 calendar days and 30 calendar days prior to expiration. Renewal requests for courses are reviewed and evaluated against the program criteria in the same manner as a new course request.

Chapter 6: Course Approval and Awarding CEHs

6.1 Course Approval

1. Once submitted, an ILA may be:
 - a. Withdrawn
 - i. Courses may only be withdrawn up until the point they are assigned to a CERP reviewer for evaluation.
 - ii. Applicable fees may be refunded.
 - b. Approved
 - c. Denied
 - i. Reviewers will initially work with providers to revise or correct ILA applications. A reviewer may recommend that a course undergo further review.
 - ii. Courses identified as not meeting program criteria will be evaluated in a multi-layer review process prior to denying approval.
 - iii. Fees may not be refundable.
2. Notification from NERC regarding course status
 - a. NERC will provide notice to applicants about the approval or rejection of applications. The notice, as well as any additional information, will be sent to the provider's course contact person using the email address provided in the SOCCED.

6.2 Awarding of CEHs

1. All CEHs are reported to NERC via SOCCED.
2. For instructions on how to upload course completion to system operator transcripts, refer to the reference materials available in the [SOCCED Support Help Center](#).

Chapter 7: Continuing Education Review Panel

7.1 Continuing Education Review Panel

1. CERP reviews ILAs and provider applications and conducts audits of learning activities to ensure program criteria are followed.
2. CERP consists of individuals who represent the major sectors of the electric utility industry and NERC Regions. These individuals have expertise in the development, administration, and evaluation of system operator training activities. CERP members received additional training from NERC.
3. Nominations to the CERP are solicited by the CMWG. The CMWG selects and appoints members to CERP from the nominations submitted.

7.2 Course Review and Approval Process

1. The administrator will create a Provider Reviewer account in SOCCED for each CERP member. CERP members shall maintain their Provider Reviewer accounts in SOCCED. Their contact information must be kept current.
2. CERP members review ILA applications assigned by the administrator. When reviewing learning activity submissions, CERP is committed to following the guidelines established by the CMWG.
 - a. CERP members have a maximum of 15 days to complete each ILA review before it is reassigned to another reviewer.
3. CERP may meet on an annual basis to examine and recommend refinements to the ILA applications review process and to conduct any business related to this process. CERP submits its recommendations to the CMWG for approval.
4. CERP members also assist the CMWG to conduct audits of approved learning activities if needed.

7.3 Reporting to the CMWG

1. CERP reports to the CMWG. NERC management will appoint a member of NERC staff to facilitate CERP activities and to report CERP activities to the CMWG. CERP's deliberations regarding the approval of learning activities will be kept confidential except in the following cases:
 - a. Legal review is needed by NERC Counsel.
 - b. A provider has requested that its information or learning activity be made available to other entities.
 - c. Approved confidential minutes of CERP meetings shall be available to the CMWG, the NERC Board of Trustees (Board), and NERC staff involved in Personnel Certification and Continuing Education Programs.

Chapter 8: Continuing Education Learning Activity Audits

The NERC Credential Maintenance Program requires all providers to demonstrate that their system operator credential maintenance learning activities continue to conform to the criteria set forth in this administrative manual. Audits are conducted on a routine basis to ensure that all providers adhere to the NERC Credential Maintenance Program's criteria. This chapter discusses key elements of the audit procedure. Refer to the resources posted in the SOCCED Support Help Center for step-by-step instructions.

8.1 Types of Audits

1. The program defines two types of audits to evaluate NERC learning activities and providers:
 - a. Level 2: Routine Course and Provider Audit
 - b. Level 3: Investigative Audit

8.2 Audit Requirements

1. When selected for audit, a provider will receive a checklist containing the documentation requirements and the specific areas to be evaluated. A copy of the checklist can be found in the resources section of the [SOCCED Support Help Center](#).
2. Providers are notified of an audit by NERC and are requested to provide information for the audit within 30 days of the notification. The information needed to assess the learning activities must be uploaded to the SOCCED.

8.3 Audit Results

1. The goal of Level 2 routine course and provider audits is to ensure that the learning activity is delivered as it was approved and that providers are meeting their responsibilities as NERC-approved CE Providers.
 - a. The course audit addresses course content and other items used to deliver the course. A failed Level 2 audit may result in a Level 3 audit if the required corrections are not made.
2. A Level 3 audit is a for-cause audit initiated by the NERC Credential Maintenance Program coordinator with the direct participation of the CMWG membership. An investigative audit is conducted when:
 - a. A provider fails to provide information requested for other audits.
 - b. The CMWG, CERP reviewers, or NERC becomes aware of an alleged violation of any NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria by a provider.
 - c. A credible complaint is made against a training provider.
3. The conduct and scope of a Level 3 audit is based on the cause initiating the audit and can include a complete review of all provider materials, advertising, website, and any other materials and processes used by the provider related to the audit and conformance to the NERC CE criteria.
 - a. A Level 3 audit can result in probation, including the revocation of the provider's account.
4. When a Level 3 audit is called for, the CMWG officers will assemble a task force.
 - a. The task force may consist of members of the CMWG, CERP, and/or the PCGC, or other expertise as determined necessary.
 - b. The task force will develop an audit plan that may include provisions for:
 - i. Correction period

- ii. Probation and or suspension of providership
- iii. Criteria specific to the cause of the investigation
- iv. Conditions for revocation of providership
- c. The audit plan developed by the task force will be presented to the CMWG for approval prior to implementation.
- 5. While on probation, all courses must be approved before delivery.
- 6. A provider whose provider status is revoked:
 - a. Cannot reapply for a NERC provider status for 12 consecutive months from the date on which its provider status was revoked.
 - b. Cannot offer CEHs to NERC-certified system operators for any training it delivers while its provider status is revoked.

8.4 Audit Oversight

Governance

The CMWG, as the NERC Credential Maintenance Program governance body, develops and maintains the NERC Credential Maintenance Program Audit Procedure. The CMWG will periodically revise this procedure as part of its normal duties.

- 1. The CMWG has established a policy whereby a certain percentage of randomly selected providers and/or sponsors will be annually audited to ensure adherence to the criteria of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program.
- 2. The CMWG provides oversight to the audit procedure, and its members may participate in certain audit-related activities.
- 3. CERP plays a lead role in the first level of the audit procedure.
- 4. The CMWG will ensure that CERP members, and any others who are appointed to audit panels, will receive training on the purpose of audits, and the roles and responsibilities of members of an audit panel.

Administration

The designated NERC staff member is the NERC Credential Maintenance Program administrator.

- 1. The administrator oversees the audit procedure.
- 2. CERP members may assist with routine audits, and upon request, a for-cause audit.
- 3. The audit procedure is based on confirming the degree to which a provider conforms to the criteria set forth in the NERC Credential Maintenance Program. The audit procedure verifies:
 - a. Accuracy and completeness of ILA applications
 - b. Actual delivery is consistent with ILA applications
 - c. Record keeping and reporting is consistent with the NERC Credential Maintenance Program criteria
- 4. Audit Sampling: Learning activities are randomly selected from a list of the learning activities currently approved for the selected provider.

Audit Reporting

The administrator will compile all data from the audit and report the findings to the CMWG.

1. The CMWG reviews the reports to determine if violations have occurred and if any disciplinary actions are required.
2. The CMWG will provide the PCGC with periodic summaries of learning activities and audits conducted. The PCGC will not receive any data collected during audits.
3. This summary shall include:
 - a. Disciplinary actions taken by the CMWG, and
 - b. Changes of any provider's status including effective date.

Disciplinary Actions

Probation: The CMWG may place a provider on probation for the minor infractions of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program or provider criteria and requirements, including but not limited to:

1. Reporting rosters to NERC late
2. Advertising or using the NERC logo in advertising a learning activity before approval
3. Misrepresenting a learning activity as being NERC-approved
4. Misleading statements or advertising on websites that falsely imply accreditation or some other inaccurate or incorrect association with NERC.

Revocation: The CMWG may revoke the provider status of any provider who is found to not be in compliance with any of the criteria listed in the NERC Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Falsification of information provided to NERC in connection with:
 - a. Approved provider applications,
 - b. ILA applications, or
 - c. Reports required by the NERC Credential Maintenance Program or Provider.
2. Failure to submit student transcripts via SOCCED
3. Causes found through the audit procedure
4. Violation of criteria required by the NERC Credential Maintenance Program or provider
5. Verified violations found against a provider regarding actions or violations that occurred during the delivery of one or more of a provider's approved learning activities
6. Misuse of the NERC logo
7. False advertising of the provider's status or learning activities

Dispute Resolution

1. Disputes arising from the administration of the NERC Credential Maintenance Program shall be referred to NERC's General Counsel. The provider must submit a detailed discussion of the dispute to either SOCCED support or directly to the NERC administrator.

Reapplying for recognition as a NERC provider

1. Providers whose status has been revoked may reapply to become a provider after 12 consecutive months from the date their status was revoked.
2. The provider must apply as a new applicant following the criteria outlined previously in this document.

Appendix A: Summary of Program Time Frames

Credential Maintenance Program Time Frames		
Action	Level 2 ILA Provider	Level 3 NERC CE Provider
Generate course in SOCCED and upload ILA	At least 45 days before start date, so it can be reviewed before delivery	Within 30 days after start date
Upload transcript data	Within 60 days after roster date	Within 60 days after roster date
Renew provider status	Annual	Every 3 years
Grace period for provider renewal	N/A	90 days
Retain documentation records	4 years	4 years
Course approval valid for:	1 year	1 year
Upload supporting documentation for audit	30 days	30 days

Appendix B: Revision History

Credential Maintenance Program Manual Revision History					
No.	Date	Section	Page	Description	Version
1	6/15/04	All	All	NERC Board of Trustees approved Continuing Education Administration Manual version 2.7.0	2.7.0
2	6/26/04	III – Criteria for Approval of CE Providers and Training Activities	19	Clarified the number of Continuing Education Review Panel members that are allowed	2.7.1
2a	6/29/04	Appendix A	35	Added the Continuing Education Provider Renewal Process flow chart	2.7.1
3	8/25/04	All	All	Corrected page numbering problem	2.7.2
4	10/20/04	Continuing Education Summary	5	Added language to define a Continuing Education hour to include at least 50-minutes of organized learning activities	2.7.2
4a	10/20/04	Criteria for CE Program Measurement	26	Added language to Criterion P12 to better define the calculation of a CE Hour	2.7.3
5	1/23/06	All	All	<p>Standardized terminology used in the manual, such as awarding, issuing and granting CE Hours, credits, policies, and standards, activity vs. activity and training activity vs. learning activity.</p> <p>Standardized formatting throughout the manual.</p> <p>Inserted new audit process for NERC-approved CE Providers.</p> <p>Made changes needed to accommodate the Personnel Certification Governance Committee’s future changes to its certification Program.</p> <p>Changed application renewal times to add the term “calendar” days to the renewal timelines.</p> <p>Changed learning activity renewal time from no earlier than 120 days to no earlier than 90 days.</p> <p>Reworded the CE Program goals.</p>	2.7.4

Credential Maintenance Program Manual Revision History					
No.	Date	Section	Page	Description	Version
				<p>Changed the learning activity review process to include the review of all applications.</p> <p>Amended self-study Program piloting criteria (P13)</p> <p>Modified the approval of after-the-fact applications submitted by NERC-approved CE Providers.</p> <p>Added a probationary status for NERC-approved CE providers who do not fully meet the programs criteria.</p> <p>Standardized the term “NERC-approved CE Program provider” to NERC-approved Continuing Education provider.”</p> <p>Defined “Substantive Change” in reference to requiring a new application</p>	
6	4/2/06	All	All	NERC Board of Trustees approved Continuing Education Administration Manual version 3.0	3.0
7	10/19/06	Criteria for CE Program Measurement	28	Granting CE Hours to individuals who pilot self-study learning activities.	3.01
8	1/1/07	All	All	Changed North American Electric Reliability Council to North American Electric Reliability Corporation	3.02
9	6/13/07	All	All	<p>Changed various sections to align application submittals with the new SOCCED</p> <p>Increased record retention from three to four years.</p> <p>Add an option to have an individual learning activity review expedited</p>	3.03
10	2008/2009	All	All	<p>Additional language added on assessments, proctoring</p> <p>Added new section on specialized learning activities, such as BUCC and field site visit learning activities Additional language added on auditing, modified audit process Replaced CEH with CE Hour in all instances</p>	4.0

Credential Maintenance Program Manual Revision History					
No.	Date	Section	Page	Description	Version
				Added new section on On-the-Job Training (OJT), and OJT assessments	
11	3/12/10	Chapter 4	12-17	Added additional requirements for becoming an NERC-approved provider	4.1
12	5/12/10	Chapter 5	24-25	Changed self-study piloting requirements	4.1
13	9/30/10	Entire Manual	All	Corrected page and chapter numbering	4.1
13	10/01/10	Chapter 4	15	Changed time for Approved Provider to submit transcripts after delivery of learning activity form 30 days to 60 days.	4.1
14	10/01/10	Chapter 4	20	Clarified the time for delivery of proof of successful completion of a learning activity to participants to be 60 days from the date of successful completion	4.1
15	3/30/11	Chapter 4	18-20	Changed number of days to upload transcripts from 30 to 60 after course completion.	4.2
16	4/25/11	Chapter 5	26	Proctoring rule #4 was reworded	4.2
17	4/25/11	Appendix 2	63	Provider fees changed from \$100 to \$300, \$30 per CE hour to \$45 per CE hour	4.2
18	12/09/14	Chapter 9	All	Criteria summaries integrated into the related chapters.	4.3
19	12/09/14	All	All	Consolidated duplicate information Process instructions moved to the following user guides: "Provider Application and Renewal User Guide" "Provider User Guide for Completing an ILA Form" "Provider Course Generation and Renewal User Guide" "Provider Learning Activity Audit User Guide" Fee Schedule moved to separate document	4.3
20	12/09/14	Chapter 3	11-15	Added new provider role Clarified application and review of new providers Updated and clarified provider renewal requirements	4.3

Credential Maintenance Program Manual Revision History					
No.	Date	Section	Page	Description	Version
21	12/09/14	All	All	The Operating Committee approved the Continuing Education Program Administrative Manual version 4.3.	4.3
22	3/01/15	All	All	The Continuing Education Program Administrative Manual version 4.3 becomes effective.	4.3
23	6/27/17	Chapter 4	All	Align terminology and process with the updated SOCCED platform. Consolidate and clarify criteria.	4.4
24	6/27/17	Chapter 8	All	Remove Level 1 audits and define Provider audit criteria. Update terminology to align with the new SOCCED platform.	4.4
25	10/21/19	Preface	viii	Updated information regarding REs (inclusive of the regional map and associated table).	4.5
26	4/01/20	All Chapter 6	All	Replaced references to the Continuing Education Program (or CE Program) and Personnel Subcommittee (or CMWG) with references to the Credential Maintenance Program and Credential Maintenance Working Group (or CMWG), respectively and as appropriate. Clarified ILA workflow (and associated implications), once submitted.	4.6
26	6/1/2020	All	All	PCGC approved version 4.6	4.6