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# The Trek to Accreditation of PATH Intl. Certifications

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The Trek to Accrediting PATH Intl. Certifications



# Strategic Plan – Focus Area: Credentialing

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**Goal 1:** We are recognized for our excellence in credentialing.

**Objective 1:** Become an accredited credentialing program.



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# Trek to Accreditation

1. What is accredited credentialing and why is it important?
2. What work has PATH Intl. done?
3. Key steps and timeline.
4. What does it mean for PATH Intl., the membership and the industry?



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# Certification Mindset

Certification = Trust

A Certification Organization is not a  
Membership Organization



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# Certification Mindset

## Certification Organization

- Certificants become certified for intrinsic reasons to excel
- The Certification Organization serves the consumer

## Membership Association

- Members join to advance profession
- A Membership Association serves the profession

**You can't always Serve Two Masters**



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# Certification

## Goals

- To protect the public
- Establish a professional standard

**Awarded by a private, not-for-profit agency**

## Features

- Voluntary
- Includes eligibility, assessment and recertification
- Awards designation or credential



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# Certification Accreditation

Standards

Benefits

Best practices



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# Quality Standards for Certification Programs

- Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs – National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)
- ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024: General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons – American National Standards Institute (ANSI)
- Development, Administration, Scoring and Reporting of Credentialing Examinations – Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR)





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# Benefits of Accreditation

## Quality

- Quantifies “best practices”

## Competition

- Distinguishes the program

## Program Improvement

- Internal review and analysis
- Job analysis

## Regulatory

- May be required for reimbursement or third-party payment



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# Benefits of Accreditation

1. Allows individuals to stand out from others promoting unaccredited programs
2. Proves commitment and continuous learning to employers
3. Safeguards the public



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# Best Practices in Organizational Structure

- Separate membership, certification and educational functions in order to have a fair and unbiased exam.
- Have a certification governance body that includes adequate representation.
- Establish a governance and staff team focused (solely) on certification.



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# Exam Development

- Conduct job analysis and establish blueprint based on those findings.
- Establish and train test development committees.
- Develop exam policies related to exam development practices.
- Don't permit those involved in test delivery, development or administration to also be involved in training or education.

# Job Analysis

- A study of the role that determines the knowledge, skills and experience a certified person in the role should possess.
- It establishes a basis for a key criteria of any certification program: legal defensibility.
- It also establishes rationale for recertification policies.
- Use data from job analysis to create test blueprint (domains, categories, weighting, etc.)



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# Uses for a Job Analysis

Besides setting the template for a certification:

- Test Preparation
  - Study Guides
  - E-Practice Tests
  - Flash Cards
- Certificate Programs
- Education or Program Design
- **Evidence-based job descriptions**



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# A Certification Organization is not a Membership Association

- Certification is rooted in consumer protection.
- Membership associations and certification organizations are unique entities.
- There is great opportunity for synergy, but the need for autonomy is paramount.
- Leverage your tangible assets and intellectual capital.
- Thoroughly consider the opportunities associated with certificate programs and educational programs.
- Accreditation matters.



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# What work have we done?

## Built on a Strong Foundation

- Kellogg Foundation grant
- Initial Standards
- First Instructor Criteria





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# What work have we done?

- Needs assessment by 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractor
  - Reviewed all aspects of our therapeutic riding instructor certification and compared to 19 NCCA standards.
- Job Task Analysis
  - A major requirement of the NCCA standards.
  - Over 1,100 certified therapeutic riding instructors completed.



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# What work have we done?

- Education
  - Hired a new education coordinator to work on providing more CEUs
  - Reviewing ways to separate our education component from our certification testing component
- Bylaws
  - Draft language presented to Bylaws Task Force for review. Membership vote planned for the 2016 Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, VA



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# Bylaws

Language is still draft, but will contain:

- Formation of a Credentialing Council to manage certifications and accreditations
  - PATH Intl. Standards to stay with PATH Intl.
- Autonomous to PATH Intl. leadership
- Council members elected from certificated professionals
- Public member to represent public interests

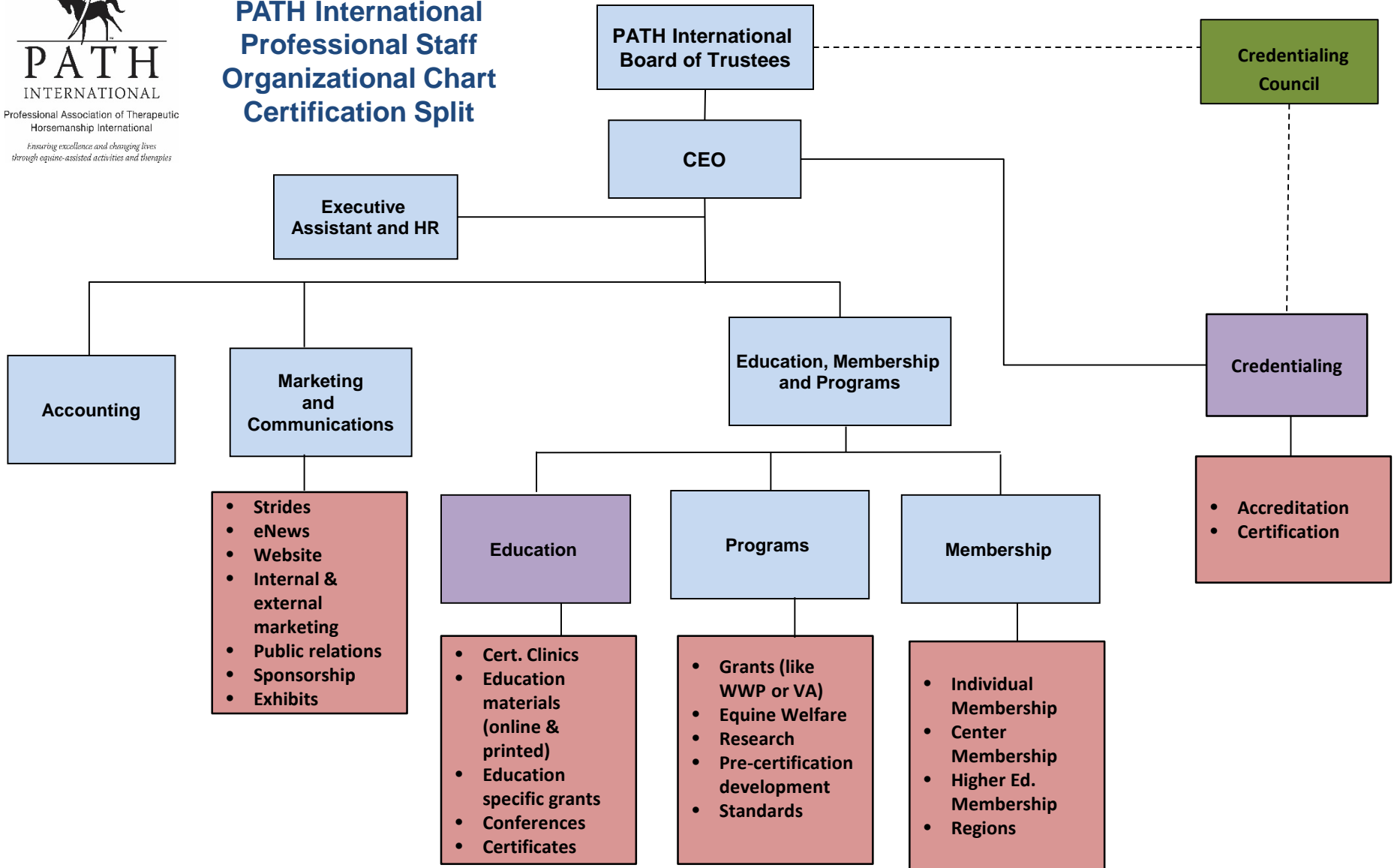


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*Ensuring excellence and changing lives  
through equine-assisted activities and therapies*

# PATH International Professional Staff Organizational Chart Certification Split





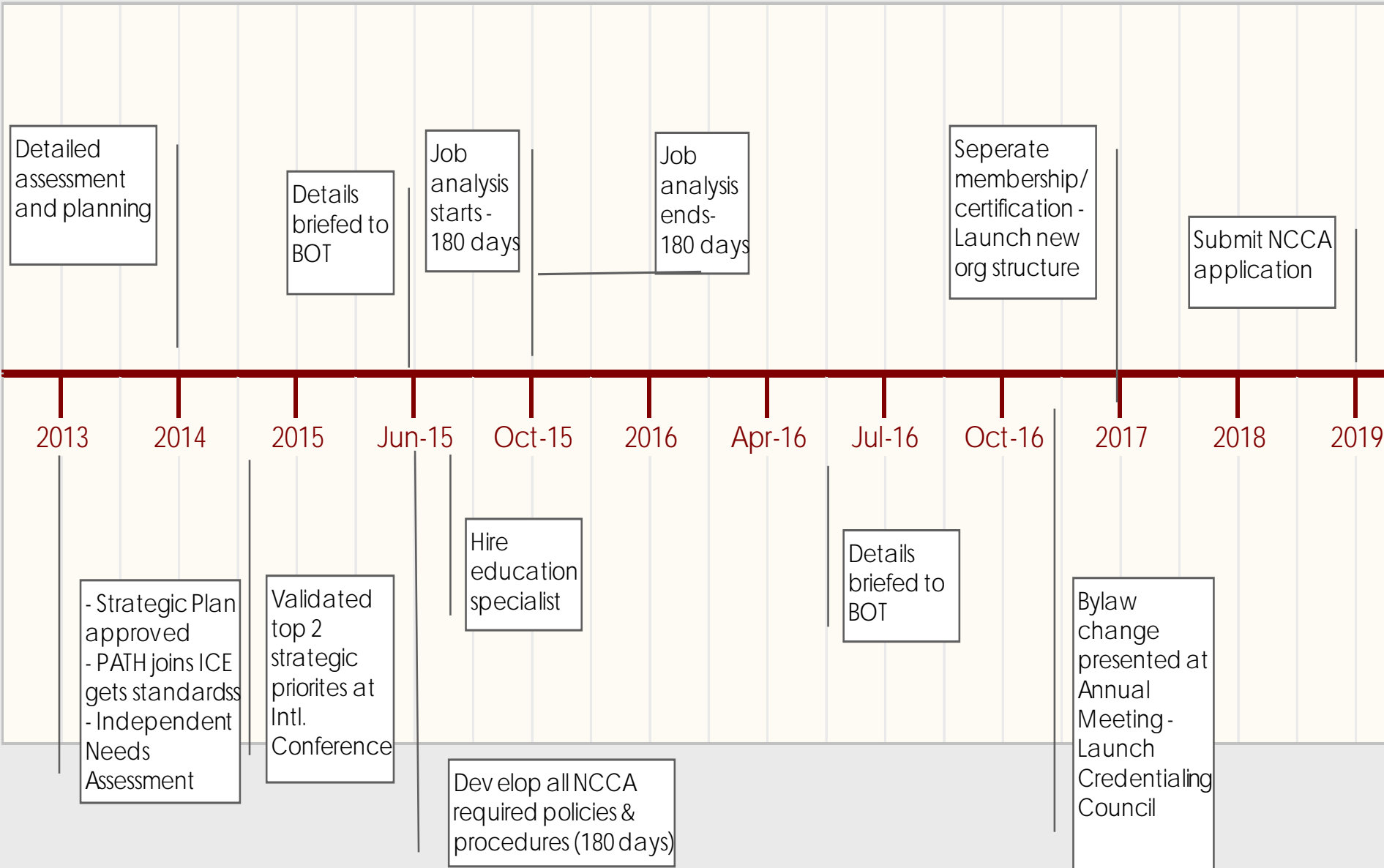
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# What work we still have to do

- Approve the bylaw change
- Separate membership from certification
- Separate PATH Intl. education from certification
- Finish the job task analysis and analyze the data
- Submit the NCCA application

# PATH Intl. Timeline to NCCA Accreditation





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## Risks – What risks do you see?

1. Loss of membership from separating membership & education from certification
2. Certification requirements seen as too onerous to support
3. Current technology will not easily support
4. Buy-in from the membership, bylaw change necessary
5. Budget impacts
6. Perceived loss of revenue to centers & evaluators
7. Change management



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## Concerns we've heard so far

- **Is this going to raise the cost of certification or membership?**
  - It is not our intent to raise the cost of certification or membership.
- **Will certification be harder to complete?**
  - It is not our intent to make certification harder.
- **Will current therapeutic riding instructors have to recertify or retest?**
  - It is not our intent to require retesting.





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# Take Aways

1. Membership has been asking to raise the professional standards for EAAT.
2. Our trek to accredit our therapeutic riding instructor certification will strengthen PATH Intl. and the EAAT industry.
3. What we learn from the registered level therapeutic riding certification accreditation will be implemented across all our certifications.
4. This will take 3 or more years. We are going to do this right, and we are going to think things through very carefully.
5. This is a volunteer, membership, board and staff project.

# Summary

1. Our trek is going to take a lot of work.
2. This is going to be a team effort.
3. This effort will make PATH Intl. and the EAAT industry stronger.

# *Questions?*

# WILLIAMSBURG, VA NOVEMBER 2-5, 2016



NOVEMBER  2-5, 2016

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**HUZZAH!**

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**CONFERENCE &**

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