

Section 2. Complete the CTE Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric

This rubric breaks down each core element into multiple sections so that you can fully analyze existing policies. To use this rubric, examine each core element and its components one at a time by reading the descriptions provided under “1 (Emerging)” and “4 (Strong).” Then assign a rating of 1, 2, 3 or 4 for each element row (e.g., 1A, 2B, etc.) based on how your current policy compares to the examples in the rubric and provide a written rationale for that rating. Once you have completed ratings for each row within an element, decide what rating the element merits overall. Enter this rating in the summary table on page 14. These ratings will help you prioritize and focus on the policy elements most in need of further review, analysis and potential revision.

Ratings definitions:

- **1 (Emerging):** This policy component is not yet defined or is just beginning to emerge; current state policy meets most of the criteria listed.
- **2 (Building):** This policy component has some bright spots, but there are still many improvements to be made; it meets some of the criteria under 1, but there are key considerations that allow for more optimism.
- **3 (Promising):** This policy component is fairly well developed, though there are still some improvements to be made; it meets some but not most of the criteria under 4 and is considered to be more developed than a 2.
- **4 (Strong):** This policy component is extremely well developed and effective, even if there are still minor adjustments to be made; it meets most of the criteria listed under 4.

You are strongly encouraged to choose only one of these four rating categories and not to allow half-point ratings, which can weaken the prioritization of the six core elements. Keep in mind that this is not a mathematical formula but rather a subjective rating based on objective evidence found in your existing state policy and current practice.

While achieving a 4 rating in all categories is the ideal scenario, it is difficult to attain. Do not let this discourage you. There are always ways to improve a state CTE program approval process, and this tool illustrates the many areas a state could focus on to improve the quality of its programs of study approval policies.

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses | | Overall Rating: 1 2 3 4 | |
| <p>1A) How effectively does your current policy ensure alignment between CTE program standards and relevant industry standards?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program and/or course standards, whether developed at the state or local level, have not recently been evaluated for alignment to relevant industry standards. • There are numerous gaps in alignment to industry standards within and/or across CTE programs. • Local CTE programs align and revise CTE program and/or course standards and industry standards at their own discretion, with little to no guidance from the state, so there is no way of knowing the degree of alignment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state has a defined and ongoing process in place for aligning CTE program and/or course standards with industry standards, which is validated by industry partners. • CTE program and/or course standards are aligned with state-approved industry requirements for skills and competencies based on state and regional needs. • Local CTE programs examine program and/or course standards at specific state-approved intervals and are aware of the degree of alignment that exists and how to increase it. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |
| <p>1B) How effectively does your policy ensure that CTE programs are thoroughly integrated with relevant academic college and career readiness standards?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE program and/or course standards are considered entirely separate from or do not align with academic standards and instruction or employability standards. • The state completed a crosswalk of CTE program and/or course standards to academic standards, but it is seen only as a guidance document or resource rather than a requirement. • Program and/or course standards are typically narrowly focused on occupation-specific skills and do not address cross-cutting employability/career-ready skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic standards and CTE standards are considered equally significant for all CTE programs and courses in the state. • Individual schools and institutions use state-level guidance to ensure that program and/or course standards are integrated with academic standards consistently. • Program and/or course standards show a clear integration of academic and technical content, as well as state-approved employability standards. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>1C) How clearly does your state policy define and structure CTE course sequences?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State policy does not include a state-approved, structured course sequence or a mechanism to monitor the quality of locally developed course sequences. Course curriculum is not submitted in CTE program approval applications, and/or there are no checks on the rigor of that curriculum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clearly defined and intentional sequence of courses that builds on both academic and technical competencies gained in previous courses is required for CTE programs. CTE programs are able to show that courses have structured curricula, whether built at the institution, region or state level, that cover intentional progression of knowledge and skills. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |
| <p>1D) How effectively does current state policy ensure that all CTE programs culminate in a credential of value?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTE programs are not required to anchor program and/or course standards with state-approved and industry-aligned knowledge and skills associated with a credential of value. Credentials of value are not embedded within programs and are treated only as add-ons, rather than the culmination of a CTE program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program and/or course standards are anchored in and aligned to a state-approved credential of value, where appropriate, and alignment is verified and updated regularly. CTE programs have state-approved credentials of value embedded within program and/or course standards, perhaps as a capstone requirement, where appropriate. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|---|---|---|--|
| 2. Secondary and Postsecondary Alignment and Early Postsecondary Offerings | | | Overall Rating: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>2A) How effectively does your state policy require and ensure strategic and collaborative alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary and postsecondary institutions have ad hoc relationships focused only on specific CTE programs or initiatives. There is little to no structured coordination between secondary and postsecondary institutions when designing and developing a CTE program, and the institutions often work separately from each other. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary and postsecondary institutions have a formalized relationship that facilitates regular interactions and mutual planning. Secondary and postsecondary institutions work as partners in the design, development and implementation of CTE programs, and state policy allows them to share resources, potentially including funding and materials. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |
| <p>2B) How effectively does your state policy ensure seamless transitions from secondary into postsecondary and beyond?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary CTE programs are not required to have a postsecondary component. Learners are not provided simple transitions between institutions and CTE programs, including from secondary to postsecondary and from two-year to four-year CTE programs, and into job placement. Secondary and postsecondary systems are not required to coordinate completion and entry requirements, resulting in learners who may successfully complete a secondary or two-year postsecondary CTE program but still not qualify for entry into a two- or four-year postsecondary CTE program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CTE programs have both an approved secondary and an approved postsecondary component, with aligned nonduplicative sequences. A well-defined system is in place that allows learners to transition from secondary into a postsecondary institution of their choice and from two-year institutions to four-year institutions. Secondary and postsecondary institutions agree on and/or have established metrics for determining college readiness to enter and complete credit-bearing courses. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>2C) How clearly does your policy define and encourage dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual and concurrent enrollment options and articulated courses are not required CTE program offerings. • State policy allows articulated courses to count only as postsecondary elective credit, rather than as credit toward a meaningful postsecondary credential, so learners do not receive credit of value to them. • Dual and concurrent enrollment options and articulated courses are not offered consistently to all secondary learners but rather on ad hoc basis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All CTE programs have structured dual credit opportunities, through either state validation of locally developed articulation agreements or a statewide articulation policy. • State-approved articulated courses are validated as courses leading to nonelective program credit in postsecondary. • All learners in the state are made aware of opportunities to earn postsecondary credit in high school, and the process for enrollment is simple and accessible. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|---|--|---|--|
| 3. Industry Involvement | | | Overall Rating: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>3A) How clearly does your policy define and encourage an active and collaborative role for industry partners?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirements for state- and local-level advisory committee membership and length of term are not defined, and members may not adequately represent the employers and associations in specific regions. Input from industry partners is not required for many aspects of CTE program design or the validation process. Other than the initial CTE program review, the state does not require a set number of meetings or suggest any meeting objectives for advisory committees, resulting in some committees tapering off. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State- and local-level advisory committees must be established using a clear and transparent process and memorandum of understanding (or an equivalent), with participants who represent local or regional industry and requirements for regular structured interactions and consistent attendance. Input from industry partners is required at key points of the CTE program design and validation process, including standards revisions and design of experiential learning opportunities at the state and local levels. State policy requires a clear expectation and timeline for ongoing engagement with industry partners, including reviews of course standards and CTE program outcomes. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>3B) How well does your policy ensure sustained relationships between CTE programs and industry partners?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory committee members perform a cursory review of CTE program standards but are not required or empowered to dive deeply into the content or provide meaningful suggestions for improvement. There are no clear state-defined expectations for the ongoing role that industry should play, including whether or not industry partners review or design CTE program standards and curriculum, or if they offer experiential learning. There is no clear role for industry partners outside of advisory committee participation or ad hoc engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry partners on advisory committees actively and regularly participate in validating the standards and curriculum for CTE programs by comparing them with the skills and competencies needed to gain employment in their industry. Advisory committees must set out clear expectations of what membership entails, such as providing experiential learning opportunities and designing and validating CTE program courses and/or standards. CTE programs are structured to offer ample opportunities for industry involvement, including spending time in the classroom, offering mentorships, offering experiential learning opportunities and more. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|---|--|--|--|
| 4. Labor Market Demand | | | Overall Rating: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>4A) To what extent does state policy require the use of current labor market information to inform CTE program design and approval?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE programs may be approved without any labor market information that supports their alignment to in-demand and/or high-skill career opportunities for learners. • Institutions and schools do not use labor market information when designing and updating CTE programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved CTE programs must show that labor market information confirms that they will prepare learners for employment in a state-defined high-skill, in-demand industry, though flexibility is provided for data related to self-employment options. • CTE programs must use labor market projections to inform program design. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |
| <p>4B) How effectively does the state support local use of labor market information when designing and updating CTE programs?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local districts and institutions use labor market information inconsistently to justify their CTE programs. • The state does not provide local districts and institutions access to quality and timely labor market data and/or consistent data definitions. • The labor market data made available applies to the entire state and does not allow regional or local analysis in areas where this differentiation is needed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All districts and institutions are required to use labor market information provided by the state or state-approved sources that is quality, timely and uses consistent data definitions. • Labor market information is customized by the state for specific regions to allow for differentiation of CTE programs. • Labor market data is accurate and based on recent information about the state and regional economies. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|--|--|---|--|
| 5. High-Quality Instruction | | | Overall Rating: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>5A) How well does the state CTE program approval policy ensure that CTE programs are staffed with qualified instructors?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE programs may receive full approval before an instructor has been hired, and the state has no mechanism to follow up to ensure quality instruction once a person has been hired. CTE programs may hire only instructors with certifications in education and industry, with no flexibility in times of instructor shortage. • CTE programs have so much flexibility in hiring that the state is not able to ensure that all CTE programs are led by fully qualified and certified instructors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While CTE programs may receive conditional approval before an instructor has been hired, potential instructors must be identified if not already hired by the time a CTE program is fully approved. • CTE programs must be taught by instructors with appropriate credentials in both teaching and industry. • In situations where there is a shortage of available instructors, the state provides clearly defined options for alternative ways to provide instruction, including co-teaching, adjunct teaching and mentorships, among others. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |

| Questions to Consider | 1 (Emerging) | 4 (Strong) | Rating and Rationale |
|---|---|---|--|
| 6. Experiential Learning | | | Overall Rating: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>6A) How well does the state CTE program approval policy encourage and promote participation in work-based learning?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE programs have no specified work-based learning requirements. • CTE programs may offer work-based learning but with no consistent definition of the appropriate depth of experience or skills that should be gained. • Learners have no opportunities to earn credit for extended work-based learning through or toward their CTE programs. • CTE programs do not have consistent mechanisms for providing information on and access to work-based learning opportunities for learners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-based learning that provides real-work, real-world experience is a CTE program requirement. • The state clearly defines or provides guidance around the types of appropriate work-based learning, regardless of whether it occurs in the workplace or is simulated in the classroom. • State-developed or approved work-based learning courses can be accepted components of a program of study. • Districts and institutions develop and execute plans for providing information on and access to work-based learning opportunities for all learners as part of CTE program development. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |
| <p>6B) How well does state CTE program approval policy encourage and promote participation in CTSOs where appropriate?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE programs are not required to align content or coordinate with CTSO activities. • CTSOs are considered an extracurricular activity, separate from CTE program content, and are required to be aligned with their related CTE programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE programs are encouraged to coordinate activities with CTSOs, where appropriate, to align experiences with classroom training. • CTSOs are a co-curricular component of a CTE program that contributes to learner experience and instruction and are fully aligned with the CTE program standards and expectations. | <p>Rating 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rationale</p> |