Postsecondary Program Quality in Colorado and Illinois

Meredith Hills

Policy Associate, Advance CTE

December 17, 2019

Postsecondary Program Quality

- Support from the Joyce Foundation allowed this work to happen
- In 2018, the Colorado Community College System and Illinois Community College Board reviewed their own practices
- Policy Benchmark Tool was used as a starting point

Policy Benchmark Tool: What does the tool do?

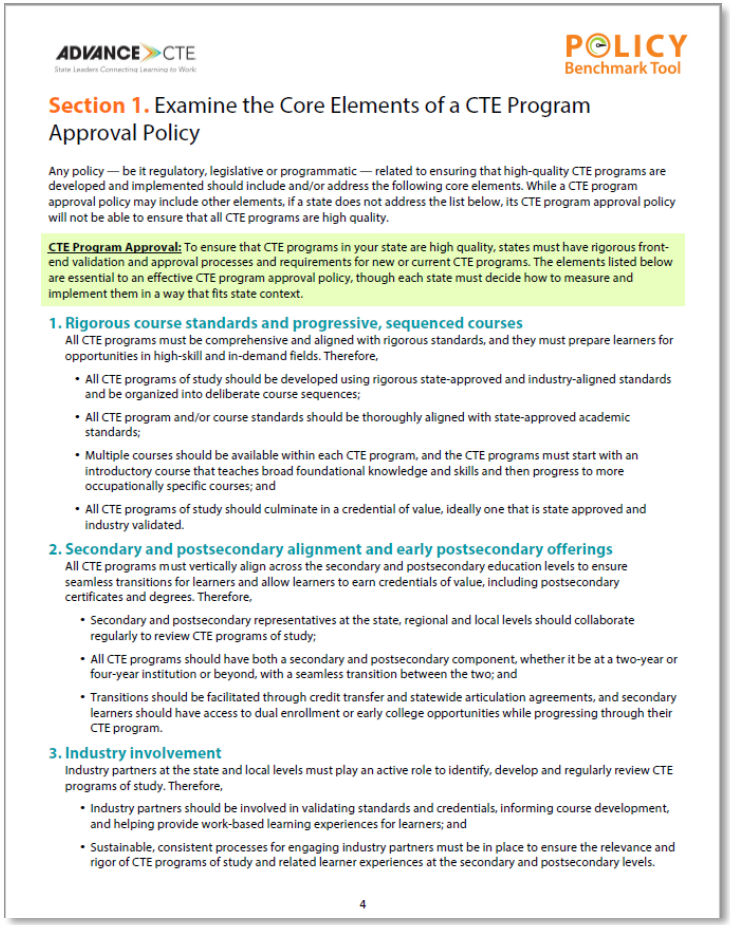
- Describes the key components of a high-quality policy that will ensure program quality
- Leads an assessment of current policy to pinpoint strengths and opportunities for growth
- Assists with "What now?"

Six core elements

1. Rigorous course standards and progressive, sequenced courses
2. Secondary and postsecondary alignment and early postsecondary offerings
3. Industry involvement
4. Labor market demand
5. High-quality instruction
6. Experiential learning

Section 1: Defining a quality policy

- Define the core elements
- Describe affected policy areas, so that you can:
  - Review existing policies
  - Bring in content experts



ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

POLICY Benchmark Tool

Section 1. Examine the Core Elements of a CTE Program Approval Policy

Any policy — be it regulatory, legislative or programmatic — related to ensuring that high-quality CTE programs are developed and implemented should include and/or address the following core elements. While a CTE program approval policy may include other elements, if a state does not address the list below, its CTE program approval policy will not be able to ensure that all CTE programs are high quality.

CTE Program Approval: To ensure that CTE programs in your state are high quality, states must have rigorous front-end validation and approval processes and requirements for new or current CTE programs. The elements listed below are essential to an effective CTE program approval policy, though each state must decide how to measure and implement them in a way that fits state context.

1. Rigorous course standards and progressive, sequenced courses

All CTE programs must be comprehensive and aligned with rigorous standards, and they must prepare learners for opportunities in high-skill and in-demand fields. Therefore,

- All CTE programs of study should be developed using rigorous state-approved and industry-aligned standards and be organized into deliberate course sequences;
- All CTE program and/or course standards should be thoroughly aligned with state-approved academic standards;
- Multiple courses should be available within each CTE program, and the CTE programs must start with an introductory course that teaches broad foundational knowledge and skills and then progress to more occupationally specific courses; and
- All CTE programs of study should culminate in a credential of value, ideally one that is state approved and industry validated.

2. Secondary and postsecondary alignment and early postsecondary offerings

All CTE programs must vertically align across the secondary and postsecondary education levels to ensure seamless transitions for learners and allow learners to earn credentials of value, including postsecondary certificates and degrees. Therefore,

- Secondary and postsecondary representatives at the state, regional and local levels should collaborate regularly to review CTE programs of study;
- All CTE programs should have both a secondary and postsecondary component, whether it be at a two-year or four-year institution or beyond, with a seamless transition between the two; and
- Transitions should be facilitated through credit transfer and statewide articulation agreements, and secondary learners should have access to dual enrollment or early college opportunities while progressing through their CTE program.

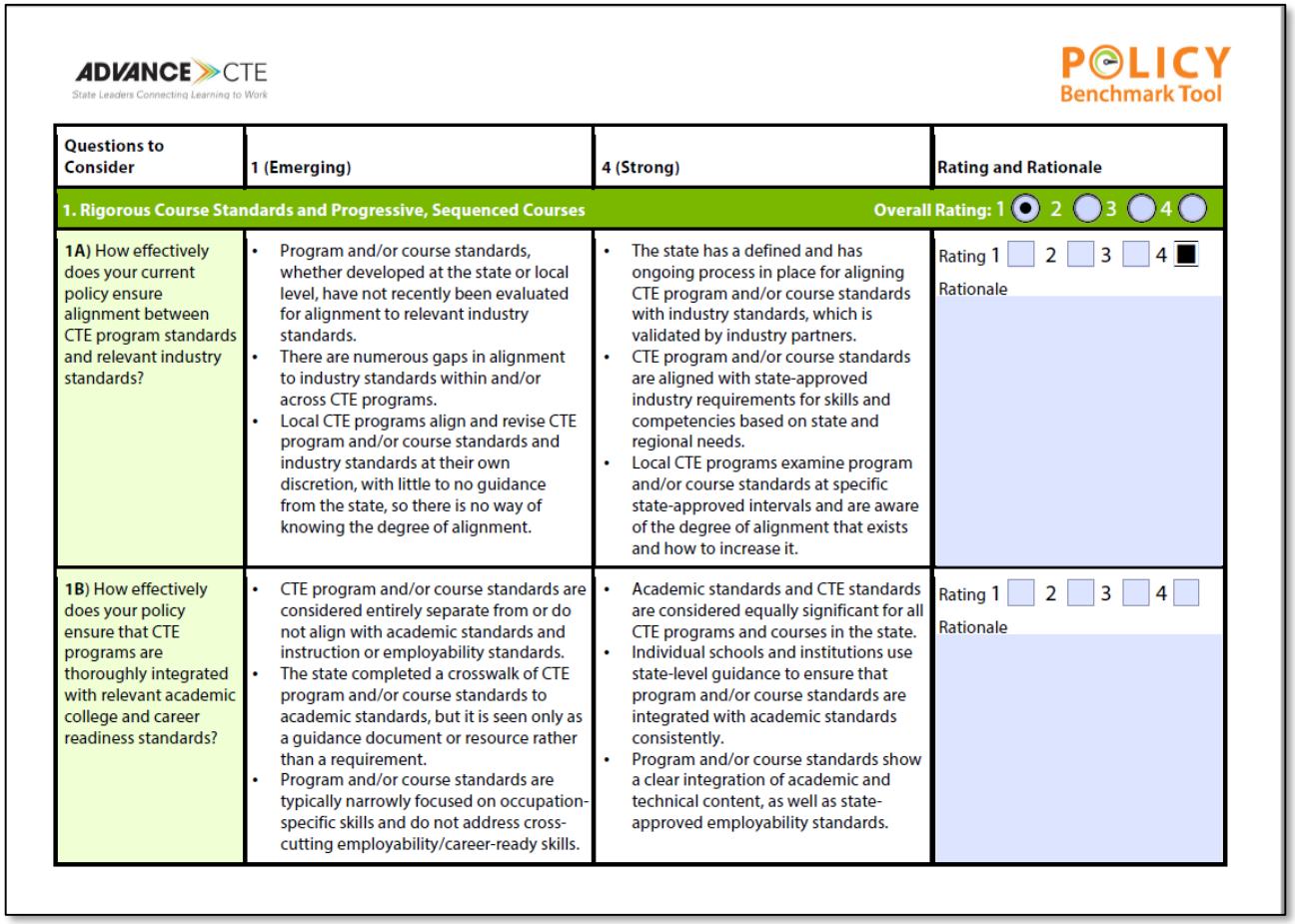
3. Industry involvement

Industry partners at the state and local levels must play an active role to identify, develop and regularly review CTE programs of study. Therefore,

- Industry partners should be involved in validating standards and credentials, informing course development, and helping provide work-based learning experiences for learners; and
- Sustainable, consistent processes for engaging industry partners must be in place to ensure the relevance and rigor of CTE programs of study and related learner experiences at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

4

Section 2: Self-assessment



ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

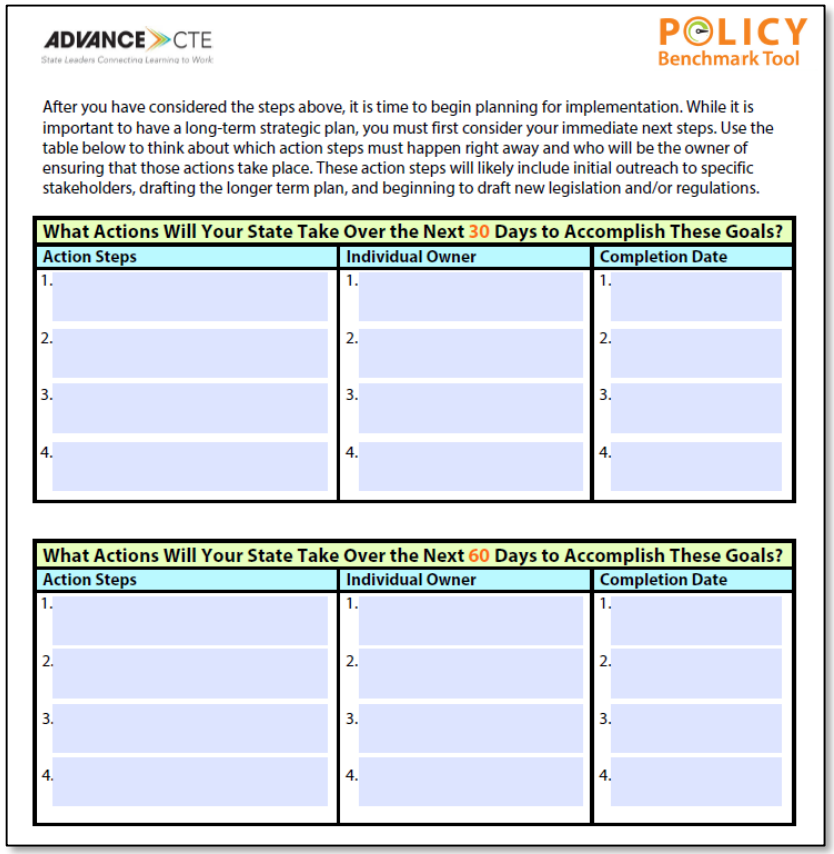
POLICY Benchmark Tool

Questions to Consider	1 (Emerging)	4 (Strong)	Rating and Rationale
1. Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses			**Overall Rating:** 1 ◉ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○
1A) How effectively does your current policy ensure alignment between CTE program standards and relevant industry standards?	• 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.	• The state has a defined and has 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.	Rating 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ■ Rationale
1B) How effectively does your policy ensure that CTE programs are thoroughly integrated with relevant academic college and career readiness standards?	• 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.	• 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.	Rating 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ Rationale

Section 2: Ratings

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.

Section 3: Implementation



ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

POLICY Benchmark Tool

After you have considered the steps above, it is time to begin planning for implementation. While it is important to have a long-term strategic plan, you must first consider your immediate next steps. Use the table below to think about which action steps must happen right away and who will be the owner of ensuring that those actions take place. These action steps will likely include initial outreach to specific stakeholders, drafting the longer term plan, and beginning to draft new legislation and/or regulations.

What Actions Will Your State Take Over the Next 30 Days to Accomplish These Goals?

Action Steps	Individual Owner	Completion Date
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.

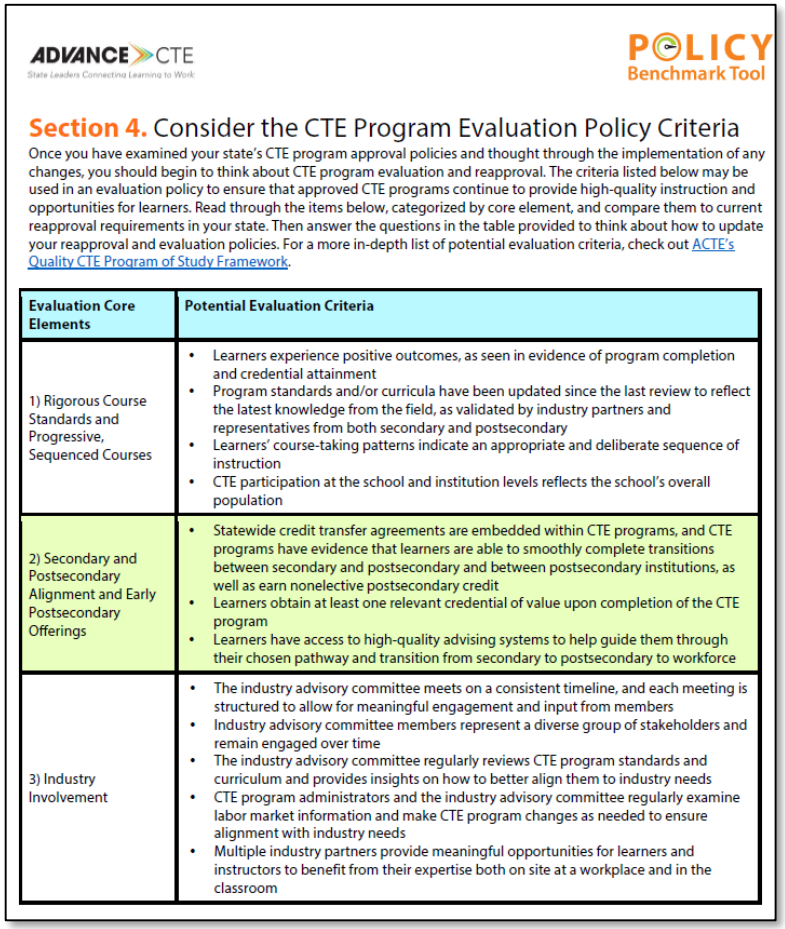
What Actions Will Your State Take Over the Next 60 Days to Accomplish These Goals?

Action Steps	Individual Owner	Completion Date
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.

- Set short- and long-term goals
- Be strategic about stakeholder engagement
- Manage risks
- Consider affected policies and initiatives
- **Have clear next steps**

Section 4: Ongoing quality

- Consider the full cycle of approval and re-approval
- Decide the outcomes that will be measured
- Plan for collecting and using information to evaluate programs



ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

POLICY Benchmark Tool

Section 4. Consider the CTE Program Evaluation Policy Criteria

Once you have examined your state's CTE program approval policies and thought through the implementation of any changes, you should begin to think about CTE program evaluation and reapproval. The criteria listed below may be used in an evaluation policy to ensure that approved CTE programs continue to provide high-quality instruction and opportunities for learners. Read through the items below, categorized by core element, and compare them to current reapproval requirements in your state. Then answer the questions in the table provided to think about how to update your reapproval and evaluation policies. For a more in-depth list of potential evaluation criteria, check out ACTE's Quality CTE Program of Study Framework.

Evaluation Core Elements	Potential Evaluation Criteria
1) Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses	• Learners experience positive outcomes, as seen in evidence of program completion and credential attainment • Program standards and/or curricula have been updated since the last review to reflect the latest knowledge from the field, as validated by industry partners and representatives from both secondary and postsecondary • Learners' course-taking patterns indicate an appropriate and deliberate sequence of instruction • CTE participation at the school and institution levels reflects the school's overall population
2) Secondary and Postsecondary Alignment and Early Postsecondary Offerings	• Statewide credit transfer agreements are embedded within CTE programs, and CTE programs have evidence that learners are able to smoothly complete transitions between secondary and postsecondary and between postsecondary institutions, as well as earn nonelective postsecondary credit • Learners obtain at least one relevant credential of value upon completion of the CTE program • Learners have access to high-quality advising systems to help guide them through their chosen pathway and transition from secondary to postsecondary to workforce
3) Industry Involvement	• The industry advisory committee meets on a consistent timeline, and each meeting is structured to allow for meaningful engagement and input from members • Industry advisory committee members represent a diverse group of stakeholders and remain engaged over time • The industry advisory committee regularly reviews CTE program standards and curriculum and provides insights on how to better align them to industry needs • CTE program administrators and the industry advisory committee regularly examine labor market information and make CTE program changes as needed to ensure alignment with industry needs • Multiple industry partners provide meaningful opportunities for learners and instructors to benefit from their expertise both on site at a workplace and in the classroom

Resources

- Policy Benchmark Tool
  - https://careertech.org/resource/program-approval-policy-benchmark-tool
- Driving Quality in Postsecondary CTE: Approval and Evaluation Policies
  - https://careertech.org/resource/driving-quality-postsecondary-cte
- Developing Credit for Prior Learning Policies to Support Postsecondary Attainment
  - https://careertech.org/resource/credit-prior-learning

December 17, 2019

High-Quality CTE Programming
Supported by Advance CTE and the Joyce Foundation

www.careertech.org

ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

ICCB
ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD
@CTEWorks

Project Goals

Positively impact the quality and relevance of postsecondary CTE programs by:

- Using Advance CTE's Policy Benchmark Tool to assess existing program approval and review policies and strengthen those policies and processes;
- Engaging local campuses to support and pilot implementation of updated program approval and review policies; and
- Sharing lessons learned in updating and improving program approval policies with the broader CTE community.

Timeline

Spring 2018

- Program Review Evaluation and Focus Groups
- Coordination of College Pilots and Project Planning
- State Policy Self-Assessment

Fall 2018

- Meet with Pilot Sites/ Pilot Sites will evaluate and provide recommendations for state policy
- ICSPS will conduct field work to further identify gaps, best practices, technical assistance needs and get a thorough understand of high-quality CTE program development.

Spring 2019

- Meeting 2 with Pilot Sites- Program Approval and Review Revisions and Collect Feedback
- Collect feedback from Chief Academic Officers
- Finalize alignment between program approval and review policies for CTE

Summer 2019

- Resource Creation/ Update POS Expectations Tool
- Technical Assistance
- Statewide Training

Assessment

ICCB Self-Assessment

Overall Rating				
	1-Emerging	2-Building	3-Promising	4-Strong
Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses			✓	
Secondary & Postsecondary Alignment/Early Postsecondary Offerings			✓	
Industry Involvement and Alignment			✓	
Labor Market Demands			✓	
High-Quality Instruction			✓	
Experiential Learning			✓	

State Policy Assessment

1. Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses

programs of study reinforces sequencing; good integration of employability skills; lack of contextualization; no state CTE standards

2. Secondary & Postsecondary Alignment/Early Postsecondary Offerings

a lot of dual credit; articulation for transfer but not CTE; equity issues; need to meet demand while maintaining rigor

3. Industry Involvement and Alignment

Need for formal advisory committee policy; lots of employer engagement, but how rigorous?; Advisory Committee Guidebook; need for connecting students to employers through WBL

4. Labor Market Demands

thorough use of LMI, but how localized?; Do faculty members understand what this data means?; We used to provide workshops

5. High-Quality Instruction

Driven by accreditation; embedded in approval policies; ensure flexibility; CTE instructors need more training in pedagogy

6. Experiential Learning

Encourage experiential learning, but don't require; need more engagement with CTSOs

System Engagement

- Black Hawk College
- College of Lake County
- John A. Logan College
- Kankakee Community College
- Kishwaukee College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- Oakton Community College
- Parkland College
- Rend Lake College
- Waubonsee Community College

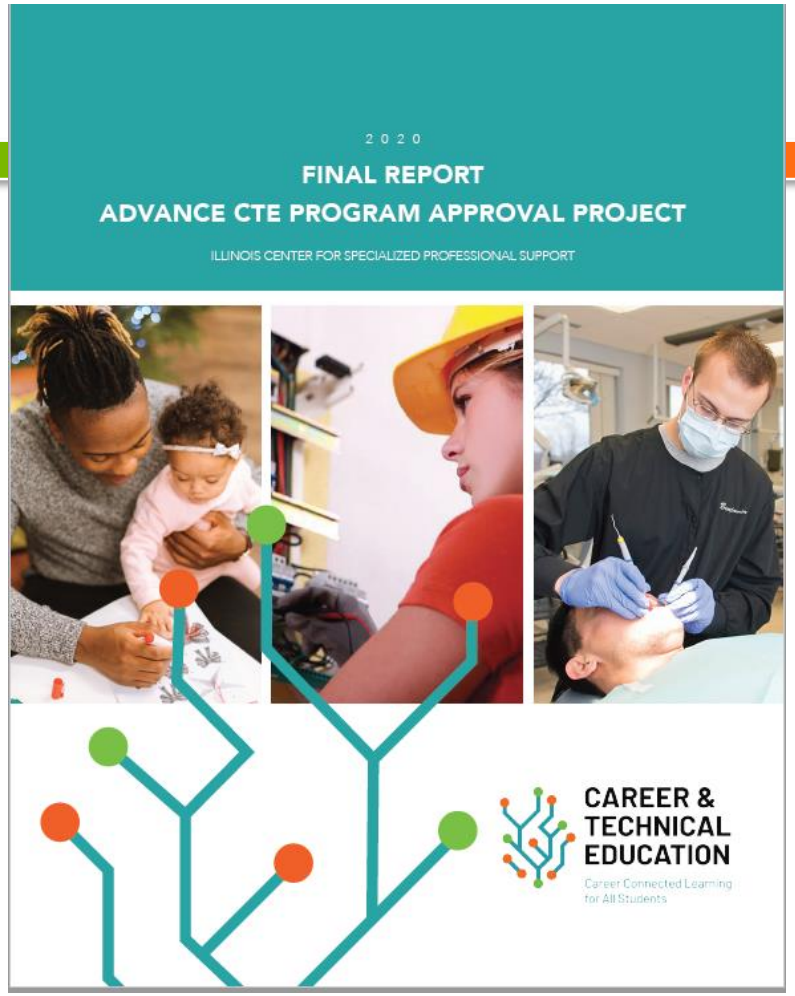
System Engagement

1. Participate in the assessment of the statewide program approval process.
2. Provide feedback and recommendations to inform the first draft of revisions.
3. *(Originally)* Colleges will pilot the revised program approval process.
4. Participate in meetings and interviews
5. Attend and participate in the statewide training that will occur in August/September of 2019.

College Assessment

Overall Rating				
	1-Emerging	2-Building	3-Promising	4-Strong
Rigorous Course Standards and Progressive, Sequenced Courses			✓	
Secondary & Postsecondary Alignment/Early Postsecondary Offerings		✓		
Industry Involvement and Alignment		✓	✓	
Labor Market Demands			✓	
High-Quality Instruction			✓	
Experiential Learning			✓	

Findings and Results



Top Ten Reasons Why Program Approval Applications are not Approved

1. Well developed program descriptions
2. Determination of program need
3. Curricular content
4. Assessment of student learning
5. Connection of proposed program with other programs at the college
6. Program accreditation-Industry Credentials
7. Demonstrating partnerships
8. Faculty qualifications
9. Cost/Budgeting
10. Academic Control

Policy Revisions and Professional Development

- Updated and Revised the Program Approval Manual
  - alignment with Perkins V
  - Revised the Programs of Study Expectations Tool
- Revised the Program Review Manual
- Offered technical assistance to participating community colleges
- Held a Statewide Workshop

Thank you!

Whitney Thompson
Senior Director for CTE
Illinois Community College Board
Whitney.Thompson@Illinois.gov
217.558.0318

ICCB
ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION
Career Connected Learning for All Students