

CTE Program of Study Approval: Facilitation Guide

Advance CTE's *Policy Benchmark Tool for CTE Program of Study Approval* defines and describes the non-negotiable elements of an effective policy for approving and evaluating secondary and postsecondary programs of study. A component of this tool is the **Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric**, which state leaders can use to identify gaps in their current state policy to ensure the policies, processes and practices only lead to approved programs of study that are high quality and aligned with the state's vision and definition of success. Once state leaders have completed an assessment of their program approval policies, they can begin planning for implementation using the templates and prompts.

This document provides guidance for conducting an effective self-assessment process within a state leadership team. Ideally, this assessment will be completed with representatives from secondary and postsecondary Career Technical Education (CTE) present as well as any state local leaders involved in workforce and economic development. With this document, the entire policy team will be able to examine and provide input on the important aspects of the state's program approval policy. If the review of the rubric will happen in multiple sessions, it is recommended that a core team of individuals attends each session for continuity. From there, the core team could invite specific content experts as needed to review different sections of the rubric.

The process below is designed to take around four and a half hours, so consider dividing the process into multiple sessions to accommodate team members' calendars. The timing of the session can also be shortened by asking policy team members to read through the rubric and choose their individual ratings ahead of time, leaving the in-person session to cover discussions, disagreements and next steps. This process is our suggested way of working through the rubric; however, other facilitation process may be used, depending on what works best for the team.

Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric General Instructions

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 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.

Roles

- **Facilitator:** The facilitator drives the agenda forward and manages the overall assessment process. Any person within the policy team may serve in this role, though it is most effective when filled by a person who is comfortable talking with and pushing the conversation forward with everyone on the team, no matter their position. Importantly, the facilitator drives the assessment forward, but without necessarily participating in the discussion, in order to preserve impartiality. If a facilitator does wish to express his or her thoughts on a particular rating or discussion, he or she should make it clear that the comment is being made from the perspective of a policy team member, rather than a facilitator or decision maker.
- **Recorder:** The recorder takes notes on the discussions during the self-assessment, with particular focus on the rationale given for ratings as well as any next steps or final decisions. This person can be the same as the facilitator or a separate team member. The recorder may also serve as a participant during the self-assessment, but he or she must ensure that notes are accurate and fully represent all sides of any discussions.
- **Policy team members:** The policy team members are those who participate in the self-assessment and have the ability to drive the appropriate changes once any policy gaps have been identified. The policy team may be a group of staff within one CTE agency, but ideally will also include representatives from both secondary and postsecondary agencies along with representatives from other state and local agencies or boards related to economic and workforce development.

Materials Needed

- Print-outs or digital copies of the [Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric](#) for each participant
- General Instructions for the [Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric](#)
- Printed copies of any relevant state policies for each participant
- Flip-chart paper, at least two sheets at a time: One for policy team member voting and one for recording rationale and discussion
- Small stickers for voting
- Markers
- Writing utensils for each participant if using hard copies of the [Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric](#)

Pre-Work

Participants should review existing state policies and related documents as well as the [Program Approval Policy Assessment Rubric](#) prior to the session. It is important that participants have a firm understanding of current state policy requirements.

Facilitation Instructions

Time (Minutes)	Activity	Facilitator Notes																																																							
00:00-00:10	Welcome and introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator welcomes participants and introduces agenda for the session; introduces the roles of facilitator and recorder. Participants introduce themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this section to discuss the agenda and objectives for the day to ensure that all policy team members know how this assessment will be used. 																																																							
00:10-00:20	Presentation of rubric topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator presents the six core elements of an effective program approval policy as listed on pages 3 and 4 of the <i>Advance CTE Policy Benchmark Tool</i>. State policy team members may ask questions related to clarifying the definitions of the six elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While policy team members might want to dive right into the details of each of the six elements, encourage them to wait until the self-assessment actually begins. The rubric provides quite a lot of detail about each element, and as team members go through the rubric, some of their initial questions might be answered without asking the facilitator. 																																																							
00:20-00:30	Presentation of rubric structure and voting process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator uses the General Instructions (beginning on Page 1 of this document and available in the rubric itself) to describe the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy team members will read through one criterion (row) of the rubric. Using their existing knowledge of the current program approval policy, they will choose a rating of 1, 2, 3 or 4. All policy team members will then use stickers to vote on the rating they chose. The facilitator will then ask team members to explain their ratings, and if there is disagreement, the facilitator will lead a discussion to obtain group agreement on one rating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this time there should be two flip charts up on the wall: one that is blank for recording discussion, and another that has been divided like the image below to allow for voting. <table border="1" data-bbox="1220 842 1520 1122"> <thead> <tr> <th>Criteria</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1A</td> <td>●</td> <td></td> <td>●</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1B</td> <td></td> <td>●</td> <td>●</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1C</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1D</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2A</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2B</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2C</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" data-bbox="1564 842 1871 1122"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Rationale</th> <th>Final Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1A</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1B</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1C</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1D</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Discourage policy team members up-front from voting for any in-between ratings, such as a 2.5 or a 1.5. The purpose of the 4-point scale is to force a decision on the quality of state policy and identify areas for improvement. If policy team members are concerned about having others know their vote, there are online polling technologies that can be used for the vote instead. 	Criteria	1	2	3	4	1A	●		●		1B		●	●		1C					1D					2A					2B					2C						Rationale	Final Rating	1A			1B			1C			1D		
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Time (Minutes)	Activity	Facilitator Notes
00:30-00:45	<p>Rating of the first criterion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator gives the policy team members five minutes to read through the first row of the rubric and decide on a rating for just this criterion, not the entire first element. • Policy team members then vote on the rating for this criterion using stickers on flip chart. • The facilitator then leads a discussion that dives into the rationale behind their votes and ensures that everyone understands the process. • The team decides on a consensus rating for this criterion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This first rating is a chance for team members to become familiar with the rubric and how the process works. If anyone seems confused by the process, it is ok and encouraged to spend a bit of extra time going through this with everyone. • The recorder should capture the full conversation around the rationale for team member ratings so that everyone feels heard. • Remember to discourage in-between ratings for every vote – there is no middle position to take during this assessment. • This process is by definition a bit subjective. While ratings should have some evidence and rationale behind them, that evidence may be weighted differently by participants and therefore lead to different ratings. The discussion about the rationale is where these different perspectives can be raised and the group can come to a shared understanding.
00:45-4:00	<p>Completion of the self-assessment (following the same procedure above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator will guide policy team members through the process of assigning ratings to the remaining criteria by examining each element all at once, beginning with completion of the rest of the first element. The recorder will take notes on discussions and final decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For each of the six elements, the facilitator will begin by giving team members ten minutes to read through all of the criteria for that entire element. ○ State policy members will vote on ratings for all criteria within that element at once, taking no more than five minutes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the discussion, it will be helpful for the recorder to circle or mark the chosen rating for each criterion on the voting flip chart. • There are 14 total criteria within this rubric, so taking time to discuss each one in depth would require an all-day meeting. The facilitator should push conversation along, particularly on points where most team members agree, so that the group can focus on points of disagreement without getting too exhausted by the end. • The timing here includes a 15 minute break, which should be taken after the team has reviewed the third element. Feel free to incorporate additional breaks as needed.

Time (Minutes)	Activity	Facilitator Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where state policy members all agree on a rating, the facilitator will ask for a few points to record as rationale. ○ Where state policy members disagree on a rating, the facilitator will lead a discussion to bring team members to consensus. ○ The discussion for each element after the voting should last no more than 15 minutes and should conclude with an overall rating for each element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel free to restructure the timing allotments to allow for more discussion around denser elements. • Consensus in this self-assessment does not mean that all members have to agree 100 percent with a rating. Aim instead to have all members be okay with the rating, as long as their perspectives have been heard and considered. • If the team seems hopelessly divided on a rating, try discussing the criterion as it relates to other criteria. For example, is this particular criterion a 1 in the same way that an earlier criterion was, or is it in fact closer to a 2?
4:00-4:20	<p>Review of the ratings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator and recorder will review all 14 criteria ratings and the six element ratings with the policy team. • Facilitator will lead a discussion about the policy team’s reactions to seeing these ratings and the potential implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This part of the meeting serves to summarize the long session of reviewing and discussing the criteria. • If there are more 1 ratings than the team expected, remind them that it is much better to have an honest assessment of the policy than to continue with a policy that allows for less effective CTE programs.
4:20-4:30	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator will close out the self-assessment by working with the state policy team to assign immediate next steps related to the strengths and gaps identified. The Getting Started with Implementation templates can be used to generate ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model best practice for planning by pushing the state policy members to assign deadlines and individual owners for each next step. • Thank the state policy team for participating in this session and giving their honest opinions. • Be sure to provide the team members with copies of the final ratings and any notes on rationale so they can begin their follow up.