

# CTE PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

**South Dakota**  
**Department of Education**  
Division of Career and Technical Education

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# Career & Technical Education (CTE) Program Advisory Committee Handbook

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## OVERVIEW

Advisory committees are required for your Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. But, where do you begin? How do you make the advisory committee an effective component of your existing (or even new) CTE program? The primary purpose of this handbook is to provide answers to some of these initial questions. In addition, this handbook contains guidelines and some recommendations for CTE Program Advisory Committees as they work to improve CTE programs and programs of study.

As a member of a school district/institution that operates an approved CTE program, you are required by federal Perkins legislation to establish and implement a CTE Program Advisory Committee. Each CTE Program Advisory Committee is required to meet a minimum of two times per school year.

Overall, the Division of Career and Technical Education within the SD Department of Education offers a general process to follow in establishing a committee, as well as a variety of templates to use when and where appropriate. Most importantly, the information contained within this handbook has been designed to help facilitate communication and to enhance the advisory committee experience so that the CTE Program Advisory Committee is not just a requirement, but an integral partner in the success of your CTE program or program of study.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

As is the case with most successful projects and their products, they are the result of great cumulative and collaborative effort of various groups of stakeholders. This handbook is no exception. Resources were garnered from a variety of different state and local sources and the Division of Career and Technical Education gratefully acknowledges its appreciation for the use of such materials in the creation and development of this handbook.

## PURPOSE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

If you are new to the advisory committee process, or even if you are a veteran, it is important to review what a CTE Program Advisory Committee is and the rationale for having one in place for each CTE program.

A CTE Program Advisory Committee is a group of individuals whose experience and abilities represent a cross section of a particular occupational area. The primary purpose of the CTE Program Advisory Committee is to assist educators in establishing, operating, and evaluating the CTE program – which serves the needs of the students, the community, and the business/industry partners – and to provide expertise and insight about current/future industry and technological changes.

**Given this ever-changing economy and workforce, students need your help!** CTE programs should be tailored to meet the workforce development needs of the community and the needs and interests of the individual students. Advisory committees strengthen collaboration between those responsible for CTE programs and the communities they serve. CTE programs that operate without advisory committees (or without *strong* advisory committees) could potentially be covering out-of-date material, teaching students skills that are obsolete, or missing great opportunities that could be offered to students. CTE programs with full advisory support typically teach the most current curriculum and apply the newest technology. This gives the students unique advantages in comparison to students of programs that rely only on teachers' experience or occasional curriculum updates, etc. The dialogue between advisory committee members and CTE educators provides valuable real-world input into the workplace students will enter, and fosters a shared responsibility for preparing students for a place in today's workforce and society.

Many of the recommended activities for an effective advisory committee will fall into one of the following major areas:

### **Advisory committees are needed to advise.**

The advisory committee assesses specific areas of the CTE program and makes suggestions and recommendations for improvement, such as curriculum modifications, updates to facilities/budget/student competencies, purchase of new instructional materials and equipment, or adoption of a new safety policy.

### **Advisory committees are needed to assist.**

The advisory committee helps the instructor(s) and/or administrator carry out specific activities. These activities could include judging competitive skill events, setting up a scholarship program or working to identify and arrange meaningful work based learning experiences for students in the program.

### **Advisory committees are needed to advocate.**

The advisory committee promotes the CTE program throughout the community and strives to improve the relationships between CTE educators, business/industry partners, and/or the community. Promotion or marketing could include talking to legislators, speaking for career and technical education at board meetings, writing articles for local newspapers or obtaining media coverage for special events.

## **ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Now that we have identified what advisory committees are and the general purpose for implementing them, we can move into a general overview of the process for establishing an effective committee. Educators and school officials must understand how to work effectively with advisory committees. In the beginning, it is especially important to consult the appropriate administrators and school personnel involved in establishing the advisory committee.

### **Selecting Members**

Successful CTE programs are the result of cooperative efforts by key partners. For an effective advisory committee, members should include representatives from relevant businesses and industries that reflect the occupation. Ideally, representation on the committee should reflect the populations within a local community, including people from both genders. Potential advisory committee members may include:

- Business/Industry/Labor member with expertise in the CTE program or program of study
- CTE Teacher of the CTE program or program of study
- School Counselor
- School Administrators
- Postsecondary Institution Representative
- District Representative for Special Populations
- Parent
- Student

While not required, advisory committees may also include teachers in relevant academic areas and school administrators such as department chairpersons and/or supervisors, CTE coordinators, CTE paraprofessionals, etc.

Please refer to Appendix A for a sample invitation letter to potential CTE Program Advisory Committee members.

## Size of the Advisory Committee

Effective advisory committees are large enough to reflect the diversity of the community, yet small enough to be managed effectively. Committees with too few may have limited perspective and inadequate information on the career fields and too little diversity. Committees with more than 15-20 members can become harder to facilitate in accomplishing committee goals. Effective CTE Program Advisory Committees often have five to seven members with representation in a variety of the roles/positions outlined earlier.

## Membership Terms of Service

Most schools prefer to set a time limit for CTE Program Advisory Committee member terms. The most common organization of committees is a three-year membership term of service, staggered so that one-third of the members is replaced each year. While teachers are encouraged to update CTE Program Advisory Committee membership and recruit new members periodically, they should also encourage effective advisory committee members to serve consecutive terms. Organizing terms in this way offers the following advantages:

- Terms are long enough for members to become thoroughly familiar with the committee's purposes and potential;
- Members in the second or third year of their terms have the benefit of experience while newly appointed members add fresh ideas and perspective; and
- Members are more likely to give their time freely when the term of service is predetermined.

Please refer to Appendix B for a sample letter of appointment once you have established who you want to serve on the CTE Program Advisory Committee as well as the duration of his/her membership.

## Orientation for Advisory Committee Members

Although not required, it is recommended that new committee members be provided an orientation to their role on the advisory committee. In addition, both new and current members should also have current information on the CTE program that is offered in the school. Some recommended ways to provide the CTE program information to the committee members are:

- Interviews with CTE teachers;
- Tours of CTE program facilities;
- Review of curriculum materials including textbooks; and
- Talking with students and/or parents.

## Agenda

In planning for the meetings, the agenda should include time specifically to **address questions about the quality of the program as well as establish goals of the committee**. CTE educators

are integral members in directing the development of these questions and goals for the committee to address based on their individual subject matter expertise, their relationship to students, and their assessment of students' technical knowledge and skills. Agenda items for meetings should include:

- Introductions;
- Discussion of the best way(s) for the committee to work with the school/agency;
- Description and update of the programs and courses at the school/agency to which advisory committee members contribute their expertise;
- Discussion about possible changes to the programs and courses, including but not limited to improvement, expansion, and innovation; and
- Discussion about current and emerging needs in related industries that programs and courses should address.

By addressing the issues above that explore the quality of a program, as well as additional items as determined by school and community needs, committee members are better able to identify and to document where improvements should be made. Strategies can then be developed and implemented to support the goals and to improve programs, courses, and overall processes at the school/agency. Please refer to Appendix C for a sample CTE Program Advisory Committee meeting template.

## Location and Time

When considering or planning a location for the committee meeting, please be aware that some committee members might feel more comfortable if the meeting takes place at their business location. Engage partners as much as possible when deciding a location, as well as meeting times for the meetings. Different business stakeholders might present different needs when it comes to possible time frames, so allow for some flexibility in this logistical process.

Recommendations for different types of locations/platforms for possible committee meetings:

- At business partner's venue;
- "Virtual" (online gathering of members provided meeting can be documented/recorded) – see the table on the next page for online meeting tools;
- Advisory night (if a school has more than one program advisory committee, host a night for all of them to occur at the same time); and
- Students of CTE programs facilitate the meeting(s).



## IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

It is important for the CTE Program Advisory Committee to actively and purposefully provide programs with information and advice that leads to **instructional improvement**. This goal is achieved through **open discussions** on the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Discussions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Program-level Student Learning Outcomes and their assessment;
- Quality and condition of instructional equipment;
- Performance of graduates;
- Changes in workforce;
- Emerging trends (five to ten years); and
- Post secondary partnerships

The list of activities that follows is not all-inclusive, but should give the advisory committee members some ideas to consider as they consider their role in supporting the CTE program. Overall, the functions and activities chosen for the work of the advisory committee should match the needs of the program and community. Some of the following activities should be considered for the work of the CTE Program Advisory Committee:

### **Curriculum Development:**

- Review curriculum materials (textbooks and other instructional materials) for state-of-the-art, current content;
- Encourage academic integration in the classroom and alignment to the SD CTE Content Standards; and
- Evaluate when and how to utilize Dual Credit and DIAL Virtual School courses.

### **Program Evaluation:**

- Review goals/objectives of the CTE program;
- Examine outcomes relating to quality and quantity of graduates and job placement;
- Participate on CTE program evaluation teams; and
- Assure that CTE programs are up-to-date and technologically current.

### **Community & Public Relations:**

- Obtain effective media coverage;
- Display posters and other publicity;
- Recognize outstanding CTE educators and students;
- Be visible in support of programs during public and special events;
- Present to civic and community groups;
- Attend and provide information at school board meetings;
- Recommend technical resource personnel;
- Recommend and/or provide classroom speakers from business and industry;
- Provide tours and field trip experiences;
- Recommend and/or provide sample kits and supplies;

- Maintain a current library of resource materials;
- Secure, if possible, additional funding and donations for materials and equipment; and
- Evaluate realistic safety policies.

**Career and Technical Student Organization activities:**

- Assist in developing competitive skills events;
- Judge competitive skills events;
- Sponsor and recognize student organization activities and leadership events; and
- Collect skill events contributions of equipment and supplies.

**Post Secondary Partnerships:**

- Review secondary/postsecondary connections; and
- Support dual credit opportunities for students (secondary/postsecondary).

**Work Based Learning Opportunities:**

- Identify potential work based learning partners
- Review the program's work based learning opportunities to determine ways to improve their quality and quantity
- Recommend and/or provide students with cooperative training opportunities and internships;
- Recommend and/or provide full and part-time jobs to qualified students;
- Coordinate potential apprenticeships with other employers;
- Assist students in developing interview and employability skills.

**Recruiting:**

- Assist in recruiting teachers;
- Assist in recruiting new students to participate in program offerings
- Assist in recruiting new advisory committee members.

**In-service Training:**

- Recommend and/or provide summer and part-time employment experiences for teachers to upgrade skills;
- Recommend and/or provide in-service activities for the teacher on current methods and processes;
- Recommend and/or provide skilled technicians to supplement instructor's experience;
- Obtain counsel and assistance on special problems and new undertakings; and
- Support departments in sending teachers to professional meetings and conferences.

**Legislative:**

- Provide tours of CTE programs for legislators;
- Communicate with legislators about the benefits of CTE for students and the community, as well as program needs; and
- Stay current on new legislation.

## EVALUATION

Once your CTE Program Advisory Committee is up and running, it is important to understand and reflect on how the advisory committee is operating and its impact on the CTE program or program of study. A periodic review of the CTE Program Advisory Committee can help the committee in determining:

- The extent to which it is accomplishing its goals;
- The extent to which the recommendations and actions have strengthened the career and technical education program or program of study; and
- Future direction and activities for the committee.

### Advisory Committee Self-Evaluation

The review of the advisory committee can be either formal or informal. The goal of the review is to help the committee determine its overall effectiveness. The teacher and others can be a valuable resource in this review process. The committee should use such a review or evaluation to determine which activities have been successful and which activities deserve additional attention. To aid in this self-evaluation, a suggested checklist is provided in Appendix D. Reassessing the committee organization, activities, and goals periodically will help maintain the vitality of the committee.

### CTE Program Evaluation

In addition to evaluating its own effectiveness, the advisory committee should also be evaluating the CTE program. Objective evaluations of the CTE program make it possible to develop evidence-based recommendations for the program being advised. Remember, career and technical education is intended to prepare students for work that leads to high wages and advanced skills and to meet career goals and human resources needs for today's and tomorrow's global high-tech economy. CTE serves as a link between individuals and employment.

Many possibilities exist concerning appropriate areas for evaluation. In order for evaluation to NOT be an overwhelming activity (especially for newer advisory committees), committees should select a limited number of significant items for thorough evaluation rather than trying to evaluate all aspects of the school at once. Please refer to Appendix E for sample areas of program evaluation.

## Recognition of Advisory Committee Members

Most advisory committee members will continue to serve if their experience and talents are utilized and if their recommendations, even if not accepted and implemented, are at least seriously considered by the committee. Committee members serve without pay, but the rewards are substantial for persons who are dedicated to the welfare of their community and their educational institutions. Members can derive satisfaction from assisting young people to successfully enter the work force by sharing their own experiences, knowledge and abilities.

Advisory committee members deserve both appreciation and recognition for their participation and contributions of time, knowledge and energy. For their efforts, members should be recognized by school/college officials as often as possible. Examples of ways in which this might be accomplished are:

- Give public recognition to members at meetings and school functions, through press releases, personal letters of appreciation and special certificates;
- Post the names of committee members prominently in the institution;
- List the members on advisory committee stationery and publications;
- Invite members to school functions and special career and technical education events;
- Record minutes to include members' significant comments, along with their names;
- Provide members with relevant materials and publications to review for comment and request feedback;
- Take committee recommendations seriously, and listen and respond to suggestions; and
- Provide certificates, plaques or other mementos upon completion of members' terms.

## SUMMARY

What makes an advisory committee work effectively? Advisory committees can operate and flourish in a wide range of circumstances and in a variety of operating conditions; however, certain factors need to be present in order for a committee to be effective.

Effective advisory committees need:

- Administrative support;
- Engaged committee members, including administrators, instructors, community and business partners, etc.;
- Meaningful program of committee activities;
- Efficient organizational structure to ensure that there is good communication and every member is heard; and
- Continuity in committee activities.

Practices to avoid include:

- Domination of meetings, discussions and activities by the program's administrators and/or instructors;
- Limitation of discussion to the administration's concerns;
- Agendas/meetings with no content;
- Lack of recognition of committee comments, suggestions and recommendations; and
- **Establishment of a "paper" committee only to meet state requirements.**

As an advisory committee member:

**DO...**

- Allow yourself enough time in your work and personal schedule for committee activities;
- Attend meetings regularly and let your colleagues on the job know about committee activities;
- Remember that the only local body with authority for the school or college is the elected school board, joint operating committee or board of trustees and their employees;
- Examine material presented to you prior to voting on issues, making recommendations and taking other actions;
- Familiarize yourself with the way schools and/or colleges are organized, governed and financed so that advice is realistic; and
- Serve enthusiastically and take pride in your achievements and those of the committee.

**DON'T...**

- Complain, involve personalities, use pressure tactics or criticize without offering constructive alternatives;
- Set too broad a scope of objectives for the committee;
- Lose interest in the school/college when your term on the committee expires;
- Deal with issues outside the purview of the committee;
- Disseminate privileged or confidential information;
- Meet for the sake of meeting; and
- Sit back and let others assume all the responsibility for committee work.

Overall, effective CTE Program Advisory Committees will create partnerships between CTE programs and the industries and communities in which they serve. It is the dialogue between advisory committee members and the CTE educators that provides valuable real-world input into the workplace students will enter. This partnership fosters a shared responsibility for preparing students for a place in today's workforce and society.

## **APPENDICES**

## A: Sample Letter of Invitation to Join CTE Program Advisory Committee

[Letterhead]

[Date]

Ms. Betty Sue Lowe, [Title]  
[Affiliation]  
[Address]  
[City], SD 00000

Dear Ms. Lowe:

[School Name] is in the process of selecting individuals with workplace knowledge and experience to assist in improving the state-approved [CTE Program] program. We are seeking advice and assistance from key partners to keep our state-approved programs relevant.

We would like to invite you to become a member of the [CTE Program] advisory committee, which meets a **minimum** of two (2) times a year. The purpose of the advisory committee is to provide assistance and recommendations for the continuous improvement of career and technical education programs.

I will be contacting you in the near future to discuss this opportunity. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [phone number] or [email].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Administrator  
[School Name]

Instructor  
[CTE Program]



## B: Sample Letter of Appointment to CTE Program Advisory Committee

[Letterhead]

[Date]

Ms. Erin Sumer  
Personnel Manager  
Smith Insurance Company  
Somewhere, SD 08000

Dear Ms. Sumer:

Thank you for your willingness to serve on \_\_\_\_\_.

This letter is to inform you that your appointment to the \_\_\_\_\_ Program Advisory Committee is effective beginning \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_, and ending \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

The [first/next] meeting of the committee will be held at [place] in [room number] on [date] at [time].

We wish to thank you for accepting this committee appointment. We appreciate your willingness to assist us in supporting career and technical education opportunities for students in our community.

Sincerely,

Administrator and/or Chair of Committee

cc: Appointee's Supervisor

*Note any enclosures and add any specific information to your school such as parking, security, etc.*

## C: Sample Template for CTE Program Advisory Committee Meeting

CTE Program Name:

Date:

Time:

Potential Advisory Committee Representatives	Name	Professional Title/Instructional Endorsements	Affiliation/Agency	In attendance?
Business/Industry/Labor member(s) with expertise in the CTE program or program of study				
CTE Teacher(s) of the CTE program or program of study				
School Counselor				
Postsecondary Institution				
District Representative for Special Populations				
Parent				
Student				
*Other				
*Other				

\*Members listed as "Other" are not required. Examples of "Other" advisory committee members may include teachers in relevant academic areas and school administrators such as department chairpersons and/or supervisors. Advisory committee membership is at the discretion of the local CTE program and district. A strong and robust combination of individuals is suggested for the best results.

**Guest(s) Present:**

**Meeting Goal(s)/Outcome(s):**

Agenda/Topics for Discussion (example)	Who?	Estimated Time*	Minutes/Notes*
<b>Opening:</b> Call to order, roll call, instructions, approval of minutes, adoption of agenda			
<b>Report:</b> Program-level Student Learning Outcomes and their assessment; Performance of graduates			
<b>Report:</b> Classroom environment/quality of equipment/supplies/technology included – recommendations?			
<b>Report:</b> Changes in workforce; Emerging trends (5 to 10 years)			
<b>Report:</b> Articulation efforts			
<b>New Business/Future Meetings:</b> Plan next meeting's agenda			
<b>Closure:</b> Review assignments, other items, adjournment			

*\*Minutes completed by Committee Secretary and assign time-keeper (if needed)*

**Summary of Decisions Made/Next Steps (and who is responsible):**

**Signatures:**

\_\_\_\_\_   
 Advisory Committee Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_   
 Advisory Committee Secretary

**School Information:**



## E: Sample CTE Program Evaluation Questionnaire

Suggested areas for CTE program evaluation are:

### 1. Precision of program objectives

- Are program objectives well-defined?
- Are program objectives measurable?
- Are program outcomes measured?

### 2. Program content

- Are programs offered which meet the community's labor needs?
- Are there significant occupational areas not served by career and technical education?
- Is attention given in each program area to:
  - All aspects of the industry;
  - Technical/theoretical knowledge and skills;
  - Manipulative skills;
  - Work habits;
  - Communication skills;
  - Human relations skills;
  - Integrated academic courses;
  - Appropriate equipment (tools, instructional materials, etc.); and
  - Applied academic skills?

### 3. Support services

- Does the program have effective recruitment, placement and follow-up services?
- Does the institution provide a relevant and inviting description of the career and technical education program and its support services?
- Is there sufficient staff to provide support services?
- Is employment and job placement information available to all students?
- Do all counselors have access to and use current labor market projections on job availability and skill needs?
- Do all counselors possess a working knowledge of career and technical education programs?
- Are career and technical education counselors readily available to all students?
- Does the institution keep its follow-up records current?
- Does the institution systematically gather information on employers' evaluations of program completers in their employ?
- Is follow-up information systematically used to make program improvements?
- Does the institution have support groups for students in nontraditional training?

### 4. Staff

- Are instructional staff persons current in the skills needed and techniques used in their occupational area?
- Is there a process in place to assure that instructional staff persons are periodically updated in their skill areas through comparable employment or in-service workshops?
- Does the administrative staff have a process to remain informed of relevant state and federal actions affecting career and technical education?

- Does the administrative staff maintain regular contact with appropriate community and government agencies (for example, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Committees and industry associations)?
- Is there a coordinated effort to inform the public of the institution's programs, services and special events?

#### 5. Availability

- Is a career and technical education program available to all students who desire it?

#### 6. Curriculum

- Is the curriculum performance-based?
- Does the curriculum accommodate variations in students' abilities and interests?
- Are programs developed and maintained with the advice of individuals employed in that occupation?
- Is academic and technical instruction integrated?
- Are courses aligned to post secondary opportunities?
- How effectively are concurrent and dual credit courses being utilized?

#### 7. Instruction

- Is instruction provided in a realistic setting?
- Is hands-on instruction provided?
- Is related academic instruction provided?
- Is individualized instruction available to all students when appropriate or needed?
- Is performance-based instruction used in the career and technical education program(s)?
- Are adequate and appropriate reference materials and other learning resources available?
- Is safety emphasized?
- Does staff maintain contact with employers and former students?
- Are work based learning opportunities available to all students?
- Are work based learning opportunities appropriate and aligned to program objectives?

#### 8. Facilities/Equipment

- Do students with disabilities have access to facilities, classrooms, shops and laboratories? Is equipment modified where necessary?
- Is the size of the building and its classrooms adequate?
- Are the equipment and tools sufficient in quantity and quality and current with those used in the workplace?
- Are the classrooms, equipment, tools and other materials safe and safely used?
- Is the classroom and laboratory area safe for students and staff?

#### 9. Students

- Do follow-up studies show whether graduates have the skills needed to enter employment in their chosen field or to pursue further postsecondary education?
- Are student organizations available and encouraged as a part of the curriculum?
- Are students in nontraditional training provided support and encouragement?
- Does the institution actively promote nontraditional training and cooperate with agencies promoting such training?

The items cited are examples of the many items which may be appropriate to evaluate in the school and its programs. It is preferable to limit evaluations to a small number of items within the capacity of the CTE Program Advisory Committee to complete. Prior to conducting an evaluation it is suggested that the:

- Objectives of evaluation are clearly specified;
- Purpose of evaluation is clearly stated as program improvement, not the generation of criticism;
- Evaluation is carefully planned, with objective, unbiased questions, interviews, surveys and research;  
and
- Evaluation results and recommendations are justified, and reports are presented in a non-personal, non-threatening manner.

## F: Sample CTE Program Advisory Committee Meeting Model

### ***Meeting 1***

1. Welcome back breakfast - Includes all advisory committees for each Career Cluster.
2. All advisory committees will break out by programs.
3. Each advisory committee will decide on what the area of focus will be for the current school year.



### ***Meeting 2***

1. All advisory committees meet to discuss→
  - › Progress
  - › Updates
2. The advisory committee decides whether they will need to meet again before the final meeting at the end of the school year. (Optional)



### ***Meeting 3***

1. End-of-the-year - Includes all advisory committees for each Career Cluster.
2. All advisory committees will get the opportunity to **present** to all in attendance→
  - › Task chosen
  - › Findings
  - › Updates
  - › Recommendations
  - › Suggestions
3. This final meeting will also serve as a time for recognition and awards for the support provided by the advisory committee members from the various businesses/industry.