

AN INITIATIVE OF ACTE



CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

By Catherine Imperatore

CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (CTSOS) ARE VITAL TO THE DELIVERY OF HIGH-QUALITY

CTE programs of study. For this reason, CTSOs are one of ACTE's 12 elements of high-quality CTE, within the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

The CTSO element of ACTE's quality framework includes eight criteria that describe the characteristics of student organizations for individuals enrolled in CTE programs, the activities in which these organizations engage as an integral part of the instructional program, and the delivery and availability of CTSO opportunities for student skill and leadership development. The criteria listed below are from the 2018 version of the ACTE *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

Criteria for Quality CTSOs

- a. The organization is an integral, intra-curricular part of the program of study, available to every student at some point during the program of study.

A high-quality program of study must provide students with access to a relevant student organization at some point during the program of study. The CTSO can be available during middle school, high school and/or postsecondary education: whenever participation in the organization would be most appropriate, based on student needs and program structure. No particular student

organizations are cited in Perkins V legislation, but the importance of intra-curricular CTSOs is highlighted by the inclusion of CTSOs as a permissible use of funds under state leadership activities and as an option within the local required uses of funds section.

Programs of study should work to ensure access and remove barriers to CTSO participation for all students, including students from special populations. Educators and administrators must consider how to overcome financial, transportation and logistical issues that impact the ability of individuals to engage in the organization. Criteria in the Access and Equity and the Student Career

Development elements of ACTE’s quality framework also address student access to CTSOs.

- b.** The organization is aligned with relevant national, state and/or local standards.
- c.** Organization activities develop and reinforce relevant technical, academic and employability knowledge and skills.

Local CTSOs should align their structure and activities with relevant standards, including curriculum standards for the program of study. Other relevant standards include those developed by a national or state unit that pertain to how a local chapter is organized, its objectives and the opportunities provided to students. For instance, national organizations often have technical standards for their competitive events that describe the skills and knowledge students must develop to perform creditably in each contest area.

Through this alignment to standards and by judiciously choosing activities in which to participate, educators can ensure that their student organizations develop individuals’ technical, academic and employability skills.

- d.** The organization provides opportunities for students to interact with business professionals.
- e.** The organization provides opportunities for students to participate in relevant competitive events.
- f.** The organization provides opportunities for students to participate in relevant community and school service activities.
- g.** The organization provides opportunities for students to participate in leadership development activities.

Criteria d.–g. list the types of opportunities that CTSOs provide to students, including competitive events, service activities, leadership development, and engagement with business and industry leaders. The goal of these activities is to develop technical,

academic and employability skills through interaction with each other, business professionals and members of the community. These activities do not have to be mutually exclusive; for instance, business mentors often help CTSO teams prepare for competition and judge competitive events.

In addition to these criteria, a criterion within the Business and Community Partnerships element describes how business and community representatives can support programs of study by participating in CTSOs.

- h.** The organization is supervised by CTE staff with clearly defined roles.

For a CTSO to provide high-quality opportunities, it must be led by a qualified, designated educator or another staff member. This individual should have a clear role for which they receive recognition and support from administrators, including professional development and program resources, in order to deliver a meaningful CTSO experience. Criteria within the Prepared and Effective Program Staff element are also relevant to assessing a program’s level of support for CTSO advisers.

Success Strategy: Incentivizing CTSO Engagement

The School District of Manatee County in Florida has embraced CTSOs as integral to its CTE programs, actively supporting advisers and incentivizing activities to the point that 100 percent of its programs have an active CTSO chapter. CTSO participation in the district begins early, in fifth grade, and these opportunities continue and multiply throughout middle and high school.

Advisers are encouraged to maximize their CTSO participation through the district’s Implementation Portfolio. This rubric assigns points to each of a number of activities, including recruitment and advocacy efforts; participation in and awards won at competitive events; community service projects; and recognition of advisers by the state or national organization. The more points that advisers accrue, the more funding is awarded at the end of each school

year. Money is also available to start new chapters, compensate advisers for out-of-school activities, and assist students to cover the costs of participation, including scholarships sponsored by business and community partners.

These levers have contributed to Manatee’s high levels of CTSO engagement, record-breaking success in competitive events and large number of state and national officers.

Learn More and Assess Your Programs

To grow and maintain quality student organizations, practitioners can turn to ACTE’s High-quality CTE Tools online library. Resources within the CTSO section address the various types of CTSO activities and their impact on students, member recruitment, and access and equity for students from underrepresented or special populations. The library also includes adviser guides and toolkits produced by a number of student organizations.

Practitioners can also use the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework Self-evaluation Instrument* to assess a single program, or multiple programs across a district or institution, in relation to the 12 elements of high-quality CTE. The rubric can be completed on paper or online, where users can receive automatically calculated scores, save and print their results, and connect to the online library for areas identified as needing improvement. ■

Catherine Imperatore is research manager for ACTE. Email her at cimperatore@acteonline.org.

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High-quality CTE Tools Online Library: www.acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE-tools

Quality CTE Program of Study Framework and Self-evaluation Instrument: www.acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE