



BUSINESS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

By Catherine Imperatore

IN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER WE INTRODUCED ACTE'S 12 ELEMENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY CTE. HEREAFTER, THE Quality Counts column will describe each element, sharing examples of successful strategies that support quality within that element and pointing readers to relevant resources in our High-quality CTE Tools online library. We will begin our element-by-element review with element No. 8, Business and Community Partnerships. The criteria shared below can be found in the 2018 version of the ACTE *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

Criteria for Developing Business and Community Partnerships

a. Representatives of the program of study actively conduct outreach activities to develop partnerships to ensure the program of study is informed by employer and community needs.

Without recruitment to potential partners in industry and the community, programs of study can fail to connect with employers and organizations that bring the most value. To conduct active outreach, practitioners should consider the proper medium for contacting potential partners, the ideal frequency of recruitment efforts and the number of steps from first contact to full-fledged partnership. In addition, practitioners should prioritize partnerships that respond to specific, local needs.

b. Partnerships are formed with a diverse range of stakeholders who represent differing perspectives, including employers from small, medium and large businesses; industry representatives; community, workforce and economic development agencies; and other education stakeholders.

The second criterion encourages diversity across types of partners so that

relationships are formed not only with employers and industry representatives but also with community, workforce and economic development agencies, other education institutions and representatives of various student constituencies. In addition, programs of study should seek diversity from across small, medium and large employers and industries. Programs should strive to find partners who provide examples of success for young women, students of color and students with disabilities.

c. The program of study has a formalized, structured approach to coordinating partnerships, such as an advisory board or sector partnership.

When a program of study has an institutionalized approach to coordinating partnerships, those partnerships are more likely to be sustainable. In contrast, partnerships developed on the strength of

personal relationships between individuals rarely stand the test of time. Documents such as charters or bylaws provide evidence of a formal structure, as do standardized processes for hosting meetings, recognizing partner contributions and evaluating partnership benefits.

Two potential partnership structures are suggested in this criterion: advisory boards or committees for CTE programs, and sector partnerships, which typically encompass a range of employers within an industry operating across a state or region. Other structures may be more appropriate, or programs of study may decide to organize partners into multiple groups with differing activities and goals.

d. Partners ensure that the program of study meets current and future workforce demand and skill needs by:

- Identifying, validating and reviewing curriculum
- Identifying appropriate assessments and recognized postsecondary credentials
- Evaluating facilities, equipment, technology and materials to ensure consistency with industry standards

e. Partners support students' and teachers' extended learning by:

- Identifying, providing and evaluating work-based learning experiences for students
- Participating in CTSO activities; for example, by serving as mentors and judges
- Offering opportunities, such as externships, for educators to stay current with industry-relevant knowledge and skills

f. Partners support the program of study in tangible ways, such as by investing funds, providing in-kind support and/or helping raise external funds to meet program of study goals.

g. Partners support program of study sustainability by advocating for and promoting the program of study.

h. Partners help to evaluate the effectiveness of the program of study in preparing students for further education and careers.

Criteria d.–h. describe all of the ways in which partners provide support to the program of study. No one partner can provide assistance with all these projects; rather, the program of study should involve multiple partners whose combined capacity and talents can meet these needs.

These eight criteria within the Business and Community Partnerships element speak directly to the structure and role of partnerships in the program of study. However, other elements of ACTE's quality framework also contain criteria relevant to partners, such as the need to keep partners informed about program of study standards and data. Therefore, users of the framework should not confine themselves to this particular element when considering partnerships as part of a quality program of study evaluation.

Differing Approaches to Developing Partnerships

Within these criteria, there is room for practitioners to exercise flexibility as they develop and structure partnerships that best fit their needs and context. For example, St. Louis Park High School in Minnesota has one large advisory board for five CTE programs: business and marketing, health sciences, engineering and technologies, law and public policy, and media arts and communication. This structure avoids overlap, as several board members have expertise relevant to multiple industries. A career pathway advisory board facilitator organizes activities and recruits members for the board, which typically numbers 35–45 representatives from business and industry, community organizations, postsecondary education, and school and district staff. Board members have provided work-based learning experiences, hosted a Career Expo and given input on the school's five-year plan, and the board was instrumental in developing the health sciences and engineering and technologies pathways.

The Academies of Nashville, in contrast, have developed a tiered structure for partner engagement, with advisory boards for each academy that evaluate curriculum alignment to industry standards and provide work-based

learning; industry-specific partnership councils that take a districtwide perspective on academy resources and labor market alignment; and CEO Champions, who advocate for the Academies of Nashville across the region. These partnerships are coordinated with support from the PENCIL Foundation, a local organization dedicated to connecting Metro Nashville Public Schools with community resources.

Partnership Tools

To develop and sustain quality partnerships, practitioners can turn to ACTE's High-quality CTE Tools online library. Resources within the Business and Community Partnerships section of the library address engaging partner prospects, improving advisory board communication and building partnerships step-by-step using a variety of sample documents such as invitation letters, bylaws, meeting agendas, certificates of recognition and event scripts. ■

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

REFERENCES

- Imperatore, C. & Hyslop, A. (2018). 2018 ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework. Retrieved from <https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HighQualityCTEFramework2018.pdf>.

EXPLORE MORE

Practitioners can 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 be connected to the High-quality CTE Tools online library for areas identified as needing improvement.

Learn more at www.acteonline.org/high-quality-cte-tools.