



South Carolina Career and Technical Education Secondary Program Review Handbook

April, 2026

South Carolina CTE Secondary Program Review Handbook

Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook provides clear guidance, shared expectations, and common tools for members of the South Carolina Career and Technical Education (CTE) Secondary Program Review Committee to support a consistent, transparent, and evidence-based review process. It clarifies the goals of the program review, defines reviewer responsibilities, and establishes a common statewide lens, framework, and shared language to ensure recommendations are grounded in statewide priorities rather than local practice or historical precedent. The handbook also includes guiding questions, data considerations, and a standardized evaluation rubric to support thoughtful, balanced, and student-centered decision-making that strengthens program coherence, rigor, equity, and alignment with workforce and postsecondary expectations across South Carolina.

Purpose of the Program Review

The purpose of the South Carolina CTE Secondary Program Review is to ensure that all approved secondary programs are coherent, rigorous, modern, and aligned with current and emerging labor market needs, industry expectations, and postsecondary opportunities.

This review is not intended to validate existing program structures or preserve long-standing course sequences by default. Instead, it is a forward-looking process focused on determining whether each designated course is truly essential to student mastery of program competencies and whether the program, as designed, prepares students for success beyond high school.

Through this review, the SCDE seeks to:

- Ensure programs are intentionally designed and sequenced to build deep, transferable technical knowledge and skills.
- Confirm alignment with high-demand, high-wage occupations and recognized industry credentials.
- Strengthen alignment with postsecondary programs, including technical colleges and universities.
- Promote equitable access by identifying programs that can be reasonably implemented and scaled across diverse district contexts.
- Remove redundancies, gaps, outdated practices, or barriers that limit student success or program completion.

Ultimately, the program review is a critical quality-assurance process that helps ensure South Carolina's CTE system prepares students not only for today's workforce, but for long-term adaptability and success in a rapidly changing economy.

Reviewer Responsibilities

Members of the CTE Secondary Program Review Committee play a critical role in shaping the future of Career and Technical Education across South Carolina. Reviewers are expected to approach this work with professionalism, objectivity, and a clear commitment to student success.

Reviewer responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Applying a statewide, student-centered lens, prioritizing what is best for students across South Carolina, rather than what works in a specific school, district, or program.
- Evaluating programs based on course criticality and coherence, distinguishing essential courses from those that are complementary, traditional, or context-specific.
- Grounding all recommendations in evidence and data, including labor market information, credential alignment, postsecondary expectations, and enrollment and completion trends.
- Engaging honestly with the guiding questions and rubric, even when doing so leads to difficult or disruptive recommendations.
- Providing clear, concise rationales that explain how recommendations strengthen program rigor, relevance, equity, and statewide scalability.
- Being willing to recommend change, redesign, or removal of courses or requirements that do not meaningfully contribute to student outcomes.
- Maintaining focus on statewide program quality, while recognizing that districts may pursue local innovation through approved innovative program processes.

Reviewers are entrusted with making recommendations that will influence policy, program design, and student opportunities statewide. This responsibility requires objectivity, courage, and a shared commitment to building high-quality CTE programs that serve all South Carolina students effectively.

Required Review Lens – Holistic & Statewide

All program reviews must be conducted using a holistic, statewide lens that prioritizes equitable student success across South Carolina. Reviewers are expected to look beyond individual school, district, or regional practices and consider what course structures and requirements best serve students statewide.

This review is not intended to preserve existing program designs simply because they are familiar or locally successful. Instead, reviewers should focus on identifying the essential components of a high-

quality program that can be implemented, supported, and sustained across a wide range of district contexts—urban and rural, large and small, resource rich and resource constrained.

When applying this lens, reviewers should:

- Consider whether a program can be reasonably scaled statewide without creating inequitable barriers to access.
- Avoid prioritizing local partnerships, facilities, or specialized resources that are not broadly available.
- Be willing to recommend changes that may require adaptation at the local level if those changes strengthen overall program quality and student outcomes.

District specific or highly specialized programs may continue to be pursued through the Innovative Program Application process. However, the purpose of this statewide review is to ensure that each approved program contains a core set of courses that are truly necessary for student competency development—regardless of geography or district capacity.

Perkins V, Concentrators, and Completers: What Reviewers Need to Know

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) establishes federal requirements for how states define, deliver, and evaluate Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. A central purpose of Perkins V is to ensure that CTE programs are coherent, high-quality programs of study that result in measurable student outcomes aligned to workforce and postsecondary success.

Under Perkins V, a secondary CTE concentrator is defined as:

A student who has completed at least two courses in a single career and technical education program or program of study.

Because of this, program design decisions made during this review process have direct accountability implications under Perkins V.

Programs approved at the state level directly affect which students are classified as CTE concentrators, a designation that drives:

- Federal and state accountability reporting
- Required performance indicators
- Equity and access analyses
- Funding eligibility and improvement planning

A CTE Completer is a high school student who has finished a state-approved, multi-course sequence within a specific career program. Completing this program equips the student with specialized industry skills and knowledge aligned with current and emerging labor market needs, industry expectations, and postsecondary opportunities.

When paired with the appropriate recognized industry credential(s), CTE completers may be deemed “career-ready” by the South Carolina Education Accountability System- a performance-based framework assessing K-12 school and district quality. This system produces the annual school report cards, with oversight from the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC).

Because of this, program design decisions made during this review process have direct accountability implications under the South Carolina Education Accountability System.

Characteristics of High-Quality Programs

Reviewers should look for characteristics of high-quality programs that align with the intent of Perkins V, the South Carolina Education Accountability System, and the goals of South Carolina’s statewide program review. When these indicators are present, reviewers should be able to confidently state:

If a student completes this program, would we expect them to demonstrate real occupational skill, earn or pursue credentials, and be meaningfully prepared for postsecondary education or employment in this field.

Determining Program Level Characteristics

An essential part of the program review is evaluating whether the overall program design represents a coherent, intentional program that prepares students for meaningful postsecondary and workforce outcomes. Reviewers should focus on how identified courses function together as a unified program of study, rather than as a collection of individual classes.

Reviewers should consider whether courses are intentionally sequenced from foundational to advanced skills, reinforce shared program competencies, and avoid unnecessary duplication. The program should emphasize depth over breadth, be realistically scalable statewide, and position completers for success without requiring significant remediation. The reviewers should also consider how the program aligns with the identified CIP code. Ultimately, completing the program should result in demonstrable, transferable skills and a clear connection to future career and education opportunities.

Determining Course Criticality

A central task of the program review is determining whether each identified course is critical to student mastery of program competencies or whether it functions primarily as a complementary, exploratory, or legacy course. A critical course is one that is necessary for students to develop core technical knowledge and skills, progress toward advanced competencies or credentials, and be prepared for aligned postsecondary education, training, or employment. Courses should not be included solely due to tradition, scheduling convenience, or effectiveness in limited local contexts. Reviewers should consider

whether program outcomes could still be achieved if a course were removed or replaced with another critical course that has not been identified.

In determining course criticality, reviewers should consider:

- How closely course standards align with the program's core technical competencies.
- Whether the course meaningfully advances learning rather than duplicating content available elsewhere.
- Alignment with industry credentials, postsecondary expectations, or in-demand occupational skills.
- The courses' role within the overall sequence (foundational, intermediate, or advanced) and whether its removal would weaken the program.
- If another critical course has not been identified and should be included in the program.

Programs should be intentionally sequenced and sufficiently rigorous to ensure that completers graduate with demonstrable, transferable skills—not just content exposure.

Alignment and Outcomes Considerations

High-quality programs align clearly with current and emerging South Carolina labor market needs, particularly high-demand, high-wage occupations. Skills taught should reflect industry expectations and prepare students for relevant credentials, technical training, or entry-level employment. Programs should also demonstrate clear postsecondary alignment, such that technical colleges or universities would view the program as legitimate preparation rather than introductory exposure.

Additionally, reviewers should consider whether program completers are positioned to succeed in Perkins V and state accountability measures. Strong programs produce predictable outcomes: students complete the sequence, earn or pursue credentials, and transition successfully to postsecondary education, training, or employment.

Data Sources

All program recommendations must be grounded in multiple data sources to ensure decisions are evidence based, objective, and aligned with statewide priorities. No single data point should drive recommendations in isolation; instead, reviewers should consider how various data sources interact to paint a comprehensive picture of program quality and relevance.

The following data sources have been provided for reviewers:

- **Labor Market Information (LMI):** [South Carolina Priority Occupation List](#)
South Carolina and regional labor market data, with particular attention to high demand, high wage

occupations and projected growth. Reviewers should assess whether programs align with current and emerging workforce needs.

- **Industry Credential Alignment:** [2025-26 CTE Certifications and Tiers](#)
Analysis of whether program courses directly prepare students for recognized high value industry credentials included in the state’s CTE Certification Tiers list.
- **Postsecondary Alignment:** [SC Technical College System](#), [SC Commission on Higher Education](#)
Alignment with related programs of study at South Carolina technical colleges and universities, including articulation, credit transfer, and expectations for incoming students.
- **Enrollment, Completion, and Outcome Data:** [CTE Course Enrollment 2019-2025](#), [Program Completion Historical Data](#)
Course-taking patterns, program enrollment and completion rates, and student success indicators. Reviewers should consider whether programs support timely completion and equitable participation.
- **Course Standards and Content:** <https://sc-satchel.commongoodlt.com/>
Review of course standards to evaluate rigor, depth of knowledge, skill progression, and alignment to program competencies.
- **Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Codes:** [National CIP Codes](#)
Use of appropriate CIP codes to ensure consistency in program classification and alignment to postsecondary reporting structures.

Reviewers are expected to reference data thoughtfully and transparently, using evidence to support both endorsements and recommendations for change. When data identifies misalignment, redundancy, or gaps, reviewers should clearly articulate how to better position students for success.

Sections to be Evaluated/Scored

Each program will be evaluated and scored across five required review sections, which together represent the core expectations for a high-quality, student-centered CTE program:

- **Statewide & Student Centered Perspective** – The extent to which the program prioritizes statewide student success over local practice or historical precedent and can be reasonably implemented across diverse district contexts.
- **Course Criticality & Coherence** – The degree to which overall course sequence (foundational, intermediate, advanced) courses are essential, intentionally sequenced, and collectively build the core technical competencies of the program.

- **Access and Scale** – How well the program supports equitable access for all students, minimizes barriers to participation, and can be scaled statewide without undue cost or resource constraints.
- **Labor Market & Postsecondary Alignment** – Alignment to South Carolina labor market needs, high demand occupations, industry credentials, and expectations of postsecondary education and training partners.
- **Modernization & Future Relevance** – The extent to which the program reflects current industry practices, emerging trends, and future ready skills rather than outdated or legacy models.

Reviewers will score each section independently using the following four point scale:

4 – Strongly Meets Criteria 3 – Meets Criteria 2 – Partially Meets Criteria 1 – Does Not Meet Criteria

Scores should reflect evidence based judgment aligned to the guiding questions and review lens outlined in this handbook—not personal preference or local context.

For each section, reviewers will have the opportunity to document:

- Key evidence used to inform the score
- Observations related to strengths or concerns
- Specific suggestions or recommendations for improvement

After completing all five sections, reviewers will provide an overall program recommendation and brief rationale summarizing their evaluation and identifying whether the program should be endorsed as proposed, revised, or considered for redesign.

Guiding Questions for Holistic Review

As reviewers evaluate each program, they should use the following questions to guide their thinking and inform their scoring.

A. Statewide & Student-Centered Perspective

- Does this program work well for all student populations (urban, rural, small districts, large districts), or does it unintentionally favor certain contexts?
- Are we thinking about what is best for students statewide, even if it differs from what currently works in my school or district?
- Would this program still be viable for a student without access to specialized local resources or unique partnerships?

B. Course Criticality vs. Familiarity

- If South Carolina were designing this program from scratch today, would this set of courses be required?
- Are these courses included because they are essential, or because they are familiar, traditional, or convenient?
- If one course was removed, would students still be able to master the core competencies of the program?
- Does each required course clearly build toward advanced skills, credentials, or postsecondary readiness?
- Are there any courses that function more as enrichment or exposure rather than true skill development?
- Are there any courses that were not identified that are critical for program mastery?

C. Access and Scale

- Can this program be reasonably implemented and scaled across the state?
- Does the program create barriers to access due to cost, equipment, or teacher certification?
- Are there opportunities to redesign or sequence courses in ways that increase access without lowering rigor?
- How will this program redesign impact the number of completers?
- Does the program support multiple postsecondary outcomes — employment, credentials, two-year and four-year options?

Please keep in mind that district specific programs may be approved using the Innovative Program Application. This statewide review should focus on ensuring necessary courses are included in each program and not on specific needs of one area.

D. Labor Market & Postsecondary Alignment

- Are the skills taught in this program aligned with current and emerging South Carolina labor market needs?
- Will students be clearly prepared for in-demand credentials or entry-level expectations in related industries?
- Would postsecondary partners recognize this program as meaningful preparation, or would gaps exist?

- Are we prioritizing depth of skill over breadth of exposure?

E. Modernization & Future Readiness

- Does the program reflect current industry practices and technologies, not outdated ones?
- Are students gaining adaptable skills that will remain relevant as industries evolve?
- If change is needed, are we willing to recommend it — even if it requires professional development, new equipment/curriculum, or program redesign?

Program Evaluation Rubric

Reviewers will score each category using the scale below:

4 – Strongly Meets Criteria 3 – Meets Criteria 2 – Partially Meets Criteria 1 – Does Not Meet Criteria

Category	Score
Statewide & Student-Centered Perspective	
Course Criticality & Coherence	
Equity, Access, and Scale	
Labor Market & Postsecondary Alignment	
Modernization & Relevance	

Overall Recommendation

- ☐ Endorse program as proposed
- ☐ Endorse with targeted changes
- ☐ Major revision needed
- ☐ Consider redesign or retirement

Brief Rationale (2–3 bullets):

CTE Program Proposals

The proposed CTE programs can be accessed on the **CTE Program Proposals** document available on the [SCDE website](#).

Score Submission and Documentation Requirements

All program review scores and final recommendations must be submitted electronically using the state-designated online submission system. Electronic submission is the official record of the review and

is required for all reviews. Only scores and recommendations submitted electronically will be considered official and included in statewide review outcomes.

Reviewers are responsible for ensuring that:

- All section scores are entered accurately in the electronic system.
- Any evidence, comments, and rationales are provided using the online electronic system.
- The overall program recommendation is submitted electronically in accordance with provided timelines.

You may access the online submission system on the SCDE website:

<https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/career-and-technical-education/programs-and-courses/cate-programs/>

Reviewers may choose to print the rubric (provided in Appendix) to use for note-taking, discussion, or personal reference during the review process. However, paper copies will not be collected or accepted as official submissions.

Please remember, the online submission system serves as the required and official method for submitting all final section scores, supporting evidence, comments, and overall program recommendations. Scores or recommendations documented outside of the online submission system—including paper copies or draft documents—will not be considered official or included in statewide review results.

Appendix- South Carolina CTE Secondary Program Evaluation Rubric

Reviewers may choose to print this rubric and use paper copies for note taking, discussion, or personal reference during the review process. However, paper copies will not be collected or accepted as official submissions.

See Score Submission and Documentation Requirements for official submission guidance.

Program Name: _____ **CIP Code:** _____ **Review Date:** _____

Pathway Evaluation Rubric

Score each area using the scale below.

4 – Strongly Meets Criteria 3 – Meets Criteria 2 – Partially Meets Criteria 1 – Does Not Meet Criteria

A. Statewide & Student-Centered Perspective

Score	Descriptor
4	Course requirements reflect what South Carolina would adopt if the program were designed today; the program works equitably across urban/rural and small/large districts; it prioritizes statewide student benefit and remains viable without specialized local resources or partnerships.
3	Course requirements are generally appropriate and statewide-minded, though some elements rely on common local practices or resources; minor inequities may exist but do not significantly limit access.
2	Course requirements reflect local norms or existing models more than statewide needs; program effectiveness varies significantly by district type or access to resources.
1	Program design is highly context-dependent, favoring particular districts or schools and failing to meet statewide student needs or accessibility expectations.

B. Course Criticality vs. Familiarity

Score	Descriptor
4	Every identified course is essential to mastering core competencies; each clearly builds toward advanced skills, credentials, or postsecondary readiness; no courses function solely as enrichment or exposure.
3	Most identified courses are essential and aligned to skill development, though one or two could be refined, consolidated, or removed without undermining the program's core outcomes.
2	Several identified courses appear driven by tradition or familiarity rather than necessity; removal of a course would significantly clarify or strengthen the program.
1	Course sequence relies largely on familiar or legacy offerings; multiple courses do not meaningfully contribute to skill mastery or postsecondary readiness.

C. Access and Scale

Score	Descriptor
4	Program can be reasonably implemented and scaled statewide; barriers related to cost, equipment, or certification are minimal or mitigated; redesign opportunities increase access while maintaining rigor; supports multiple postsecondary outcomes and likely increases or sustains completers.



Score	Descriptor
3	Program is largely scalable with manageable barriers; access challenges exist but could be addressed through adjustments; supports multiple postsecondary pathways with moderate impact on completion rates.
2	Program faces significant access or scalability challenges; cost, staffing, or equipment present barriers; limited flexibility in sequencing; potential negative impact on completers.
1	Program is not scalable statewide; barriers to access are substantial; redesign opportunities are minimal; the program restricts access and reduces completion opportunities.

D. Labor Market & Postsecondary Alignment

Score	Descriptor
4	Skills align strongly with current and emerging South Carolina labor market needs; students are clearly prepared for in-demand credentials or entry-level roles; postsecondary partners would recognize the program as meaningful preparation; depth of skill is prioritized.
3	Program aligns with general labor market needs and postsecondary expectations, though some skill gaps or opportunities for deeper preparation exist.
2	Alignment with labor market or postsecondary expectations is inconsistent or outdated; breadth of exposure outweighs depth of skill development.
1	Program shows little alignment with current labor market demands or postsecondary expectations; skills taught are insufficient or misaligned.

E. Modernization & Future Readiness

Score	Descriptor
4	Program reflects current industry practices and technologies; students gain adaptable, future-ready skills; reviewers support necessary changes—even if they require investment or redesign.
3	Program is largely current, with some elements needing modernization; future adaptability is present but could be strengthened.
2	Program reflects outdated practices or technologies in multiple areas; limited emphasis on transferable or adaptable skills.
1	Program is largely outdated and does not prepare students for evolving industry demands or future workforce needs.

Overall Recommendation

- ☐ Endorse program as proposed
- ☐ Endorse with targeted changes
- ☐ Major revision needed
- ☐ Consider redesign or retirement

Brief Rationale (2–3 bullets):