

Current Career and Technical Education (CTE) System

Governance

Currently, CTE students in Vermont are served by 17 CTE Centers, each serving students from local sending high schools, with three distinct governance structures: 11 CTE Centers within a local education agency (LEA); four regional technical center school districts; one region with two independent schools providing public CTE. In one region, some CTE is provided by a comprehensive high school that is geographically distant from the nearest CTE Center. Some Center programs are full time, while others are part time.

This variation has the benefit of allowing CTE Centers to customize their offerings and structures to the needs of their sending schools. At the same time, there is concern that the variation is unnecessarily complicated and makes the administration and oversight of these systems inefficient, contributing to:

- inequities in program access and quality for students,
- lack of consistency of policies across the system, and
- weak alignment with postsecondary pathways and state economic development goals.

AOE oversees the full system but does not have sufficient capacity to effectively monitor it, provide support to Centers, and ensure alignment with broader workforce goals for the state. AOE staff report that because of the numerous governance structures, its time is often taken up with administrative guidance and ensuring compliance with federal Perkins requirements rather than curriculum support, teacher support, data collection and analysis, strategic planning and overall system improvement.

Currently, there is no statewide career exploration programming to allow middle school students to explore their personal interests and strengths and build their awareness and understanding of CTE programming and career opportunities. At the high school level, career exploration is not offered consistently to students in grades 9-10 across the state. Only 11 CTE Centers/high schools offer Pre-Tech Exploratory and/or Foundation courses to expose students to CTE options. Total enrollment in these courses is under 1,500 students statewide, which is approximately 9 percent¹ of students in those grades. Current State Board rules² require CTE Centers to provide program information to potential students within their regions to assist the student in making a decision to enroll. It is the responsibility of the sending schools to provide “reasonable opportunity” for students in grades 7-12 to learn about CTE options and the study explored ways to build greater awareness.

Funding

Vermont’s funding system for CTE is based on a formula that includes student participation in CTE as measured in full time equivalents (FTEs). A large portion of CTE center funding comes in the form of tuition payments from sending districts; the FTE calculation is intended to determine each sending district’s portion of the cost of the CTE center. Vermont uses a six-semester (or 3-year) FTE rolling average to determine costs for sending districts, which helps



stabilize center budgets during times of short-term lower enrollment. The state does have a provision for supplemental assistance for centers experiencing enrollment growth.

The state makes a contribution from the Education Fund to help offset the cost of CTE for all in-state students statewide through the Supplemental Assistance Grant, explained in more detail later in this section. This contribution comes “off the top” of the Education Fund, meaning that allocation comes before allocation of funds to districts, and the cost of that contribution is borne by all districts statewide.

Additional state contributions to centers from the Education Fund include salary assistance and transportation assistance³. FY 2024 CTE transportation is provided at a rate of \$3.23 per mile. Salary assistance includes a portion of salary and benefits for CTE Center Director, Guidance Director, Co-op teacher, Assistant Director for Adult Education, and in some cases (enrollment and population dependent), Assistant Director of CTE Center.

When centers are located in a host district, the CTE center budget is contained within the host district’s budget, and local voters in that host district approve the budget. In the regional technical center district model, once the regional technical center district adopts its budget, it becomes an obligation of all member districts. Districts that send students to private institutions simply pay the institution’s tuition rate.

Tuition Rates and Payment

Each CTE center sets its budget, the exact process is dictated by the center’s governance model, and once the budget is approved, establishes the CTE tuition for the upcoming school year through the following process. First, the center determines its actual cost, excluding federal grants, state salary assistance and equipment, and facility usage income. This is the center’s net cost, and the amount to be raised through tuition.

To determine the CTE tuition rate, that net cost is divided by the total student FTEs – the anticipated number of out-of-state FTEs plus the (in-state) six-semester FTE average. This is the tuition rate to be charged to out-of-state students. To determine the in-state tuition rate, the full tuition rate is reduced by the Supplemental Assistance Grant, a tuition reduction grant, calculated by multiplying the six-semester average FTE by 35% of the state’s base education amount⁴. For FY2024, this supplemental grant assistance is \$4,375 per FTE⁵.

The actual payment of tuition for in-state students comes in two phases. First, the AOE makes a payment to each CTE center “on behalf” of sending high schools. The “on behalf” payment is equal to 87 percent of the state’s base education funding amount, multiplied by the six-semester FTE average of each sending high district⁶. Although paid out of the Education Fund by AOE to the center, these “on behalf” payments come directly from the state instead of being sent to each district. The second phase is a tuition payment from the sending district to the CTE center. For each sending district, the in-state tuition amount is multiplied by the district’s six-semester average. The “on behalf” payment is subtracted, and the remaining balance is the tuition amount due to the center from the sending district.

Impacts of System

The current funding system creates a number of issues including:

- Large variation in resources available to CTE students in different centers across Vermont. These variations also lead to variations in the costs of CTE to districts in the state.
- The tuition based system is reported to create a tension for sending districts, as they try to balance the resources available for students who remain in the district versus the opportunities for students who want CTE opportunities.
- A lack of resources remaining at the sending district to address costs incurred and support costs for their students including guidance and ensuring the student graduates.

Proposed System

Governance

APA and AOE propose a single CTE BOCES to oversee the CTE centers in the state. This new governance model would offer Vermont several benefits:

- A simpler, consistent approach to governance with well-defined roles and responsibilities for the AOE, the new BOCES, CTE Centers, advisory boards and sending districts;
 - AOE remains responsible for monitoring and compliance with federal and state funding and requirements, data management and reporting, and coordinating state-led professional development and support
 - CTE BOCES becomes responsible for a coordinated/statewide Perkins Plan, distributing funds to centers, and determining common policies and administrative processes
 - CTE Centers remain responsible for providing day-to-day delivery of CTE to students, overseeing center programs, employees and budgets, contribute to the development of the BOCES Perkins Plan
 - BOCES advisory board will hire the BOCES Executive Director and advise on CTE program offerings and workforce needs
 - Sending districts will retain CTE students as students of record, working with the sending high schools to provide counseling, coordinating special education services, access to extracurriculars/athletics, granting high school diplomas, and working with the BOCES to coordinate transportation of students
- Improved efficiency by centralizing some functions such as HR, finance, contracting, payroll and streamlining processes;
- Improved coordination among Centers and between Centers and sending schools for policies such as program admissions, completion and student supports; school and professional development calendars; and how to demonstrate proficiency needed for graduation;

- Increased support for teachers and programs, including induction for new teachers, coordinated curriculum development, and on-going professional development;
- Support for administration and budgeting which might include consolidation of functions such as shared professional development and a unified Perkins Plan for the BOCES rather than individual center plans to reduce administrative burden; and
- Improved transparency in programming, staffing, and budgetary decision-making based on a re-mapping of roles and responsibilities.

A governance change would also better enable Vermont to articulate, resource, and meet state-level CTE goals, including:

- Strengthen CTE student outcomes statewide with a focus on closing equity gaps;
- Improve student access to consistent, high-quality CTE programming aligned to state workforce goals;
- Prioritize support for CTE programs in industries that are key to maintaining Vermont's competitiveness; and
- Improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary CTE pathways.

In addition to the current CTE Center structure, the AOE and APA propose creating additional opportunities for CTE at traditional high school and middle schools. Resources have been identified in the proposed base cost that would allow students to take CTE courses in these settings. The goal is to expand both the number of students and the grades in which they take CTE. The new BOCES would support these new opportunities by providing curriculum and programming technical assistance to districts in the state.

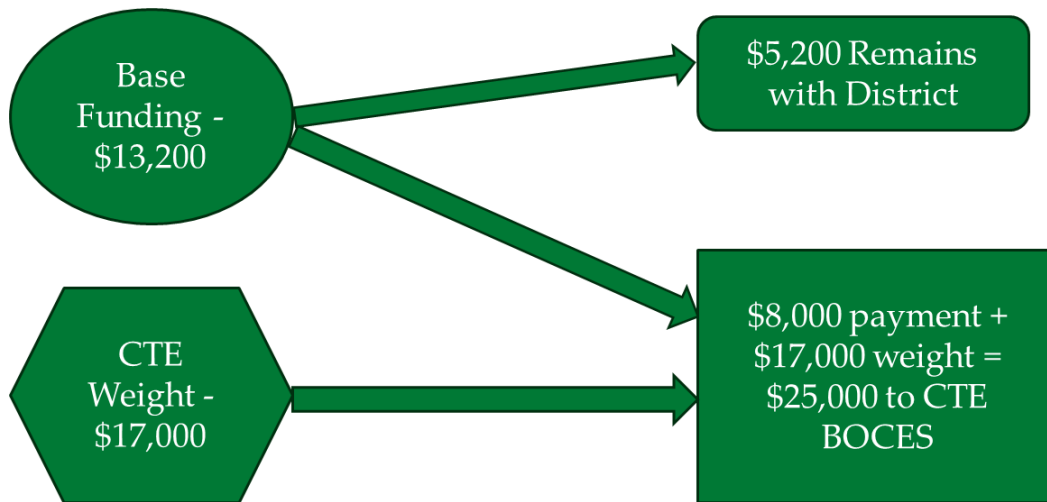
The new CTE BOCES will oversee and coordinate the CTE centers. It will coordinate transportation with sending districts, ensure consistent and high-quality program implementation and student academic support across centers, and partner with state and local workforce development officials and boards to balance program offerings statewide with workforce needs. Local districts will retain CTE students as students of record, providing counseling, coordinating special education services, and granting high school diplomas, for example.

Funding

AOE and APA propose funding the new CTE BOCES directly for all center-based CTE students. The proposed funding amount for each CTE Full Time Equivalent (FTE) is estimated to be \$25,000. Funding would be made up of two parts. Each CTE student will still be eligible for the \$13,200 base funding amount, but an "on behalf" payment to the CTE BOCES of \$8,000 will be made from that base amount for each CTE FTE, with a prorated amount for part-time students. Sending districts will keep the remaining base amount to provide the guidance and other support services for students, oversee graduation requirements and granting the diploma, and to ensure that the sending school can keep robust course offerings for remaining students. In addition, the CTE BOCES will receive the remainder of the \$25,000 through a 1.3 weight in the foundation formula. CTE students will no longer be funded on just the six-semester average but

instead on the better of the six-semester average or the average of the previous two semesters.

Graphic 1. Funding for CTE Centers



The CTE BOCES would be expected to fund all operations from the \$25,000 per FTE including building budgets for each of the public CTE centers. Staff would also be needed to support the expanded CTE opportunities in traditional public high school and middle schools. APA’s analysis of expenditure data for public CTE centers found that median expenditures in public CTE centers reported in program codes 31 and 32 (the accounting codes designated for career and technical education expenditures) in FY 23 was \$25,184, inclusive of federal funds, and \$23,303 when federal funds were excluded.

Table 1. Median Expenditures Per CTE FTE, Program Code 31 & 32

	FY21	FY22	FY23
Median Expenditures Per FTE, Program Code 31 & 32, All Expenditures	\$22,853	\$23,420	\$25,184
Median Expenditures Per FTE, Program Code 31 & 32, Excluding Federal	\$20,041	\$21,822	\$23,303

As part of planning, an assessment of the current conditions and future facilities needs will need to be considered.