

OKLAHOMA CENTERS OF WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

Initial Guidelines for Certification

*Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education
1500 West Seventh Avenue | Stillwater OK 74074-4365*

Oklahoma**WORKS**Together

2021 Application Process





LOCAL CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Local System Resources Alignment
Central Coordination of State System

Committee Recommendation



PURPOSE AND MISSION

Efforts to strengthen workforce are a major priority for the state and the nation. We must leverage our existing state resources and develop a plan of action aligned with the needs of business and industry and consistent with Oklahoma's rich history and culture. The centers will integrate resources within the educational system and beyond into a branded program that businesses, both national and international, will trust to support their plans for expansion and that current Oklahoma companies continue to use.

Local ownership is essential to the success and sustainment of an effective workforce system. Oklahoma communities are already taking great strides toward meeting the evolving demands of the workforce. Key strategies for the Centers of Workforce Excellence are the following:

- ✓ Leverage Oklahoma's educational infrastructure.
- ✓ Strategically align local and regional workforce demand.
- ✓ Maximize existing resources and programs to support the workforce needs.
- ✓ Engage Oklahoma business leaders.
- ✓ Brand the centers.

DESIGNATION OF A CENTER FOR WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

Designation of a local Center of Workforce Excellence serves as official recognition of the hard work and dedication of Oklahoma communities to leverage and align resources to build a comprehensive workforce development system that is responsive to local and state demand. Specifically, recognition offers value:

- » **Business and industry** realize improvement in the available workforce and talent pipeline through the efforts of the Center of Workforce Excellence.
- » **Students** can see the value placed by the community and the state on their career pathways, academic plans and course choices.
- » **Parents and other taxpayers** can see added returns on their investments in local initiatives and activities.
- » **Educators, business owners and community leaders** receive public acknowledgment of their existing partnerships and workforce development efforts.
- » **Individuals and businesses seeking to relocate or strengthen their existing business** can consider the community's dedication to education and training as another factor in their decision.
- » **Inclusion in State of Oklahoma marketing materials** focused on economic development to assist in promoting the assets of the community.
- » **Qualified to apply for additional incentive funding** to further support the development and sustainment of the Center of Excellence.

To seek designation as a Center for Workforce Excellence follow the guidelines in this document to prepare and submit the application. The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education reviews each application and uses a rubric to determine its completeness. Successful applications will be submitted for consideration to be certified as an Oklahoma Center of Workforce Excellence.

The approach to being designated can be unique for each community. It should document ongoing efforts and plans among community stakeholders aimed at strengthening local education opportunities and workforce development activities.

DOCUMENTING THE CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The designation as a Center for Workforce Excellence should document local and regional needs and plans. The completed application serves as the road map to the workforce priorities in the community or region. As a result, no typical application exists. A completed application must address each of the following five (5) topics:

1. EDUCATION AND INNOVATION

Use existing partnerships and resources to deliver diverse educational opportunities to provide a competitive workforce. *Documentation in this section can include the following:*

- » Data about existing educational footprint for region being served.
- » Data about workforce supply and demand—labor market alignment.
- » Data about gaps in educational components for regional workforce.
- » Data about local/regional workforce development needs and plans.
- » Existing pathways in local education and training opportunities for region being served in the identified ecosystem.
- » Examples of career awareness opportunities/events involving parents or guardians, students and employers.
- » Support for credentials and certifications among education providers and employers that align with advisory board requirements.
- » Support for activities and initiatives of CareerTech student organizations, Cooperative Extension organizations, scouting organizations and other organizations

2. PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVISORY BOARDS

This section identifies existing and planned partnerships within the community (or region) that contribute to the efforts of workforce development. *Documentation in this section can include the following:*

- » Education-employer partnerships (local or state businesses or industries, public schools, technology centers, higher education entities, workforce development organizations).
- » Cooperative agreements.
- » Work-based learning programs.
- » Industry advisory boards.
- » Ongoing plans for connection with companies and central point of contact.
- » Connections with industry advocacy groups, Workforce related community nonprofits, tribal governments, related state agencies and federal programs.

3. EVIDENCE OF PLANNING AND PROGRESS

This section restates major outcomes involving key partners (listed above), results benchmarks and the status of progress toward each. *This section resembles a mini action plan that answers these questions:*

- » Outcomes/Goals—What are the major goals of each partnership, initiative or activity?
- » Measures/Benchmarks—How will results be measured for each outcome or goal?
- » Status—For each outcome or goal, is it completed, in progress or planned?

4. EVIDENCE OF PROMOTION AND RECOGNITION

This section lists promotion activities and recognition events relating to the work of the center. *Documentation in this section can include the following:*

- » Examples of certificates.
- » Examples of local media coverage.
- » Examples of industry recognition events and communication outlets (newsletters, websites, social media, etc.).
- » Examples of promotional materials.
- » Recognition events and ceremonies.

5. EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY—

This section identifies plans or commitments to support and expand the work of the partnerships. *Documentation in this section can include the following:*

- » Examples of activity or event growth or expansion plans.
- » Examples of facilities growth or improvement plans relating to workforce activities.
- » Examples of long-term targets in community, education and employer planning.
- » Examples of planned budget commitments for partnerships and activities.



APPLICATION CHECKLIST

GENERAL REMINDERS

- ✓ Submit an MS Word document not to exceed ten (10) pages (excluding a cover sheet and letters of support).
- ✓ Use the Calibri or Times New Roman font and a 12-point font size.
- ✓ Single-space the text in each application section and double-space between sections.
- ✓ Number the pages in the completed application.
- ✓ Include the five section headings as listed:
 - » Evidence of Education and Innovation.
 - » Evidence of Partnerships and Advisory Boards.
 - » Evidence of Planning and Progress.
 - » Evidence of Promotion and Recognition.
 - » Evidence of Sustainability.
- ✓ Include the documentation for each section, as described on earlier pages of this guide.
- ✓ Make a copy of the completed application and letters of support for your records.
- ✓ Email (1) the completed application and (2) letters of support to: resourcecenter@careertech.ok.gov.

In the email subject line, write, "Center of Workforce Excellence Application."



APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Add a cover sheet. Provide the following information on the cover sheet:

COMMUNITY REGION APPLICATION

For: [CITY/REGION NAME]

Date: [MONTH, DAY, YEAR]

Submitted by: [NAME OF PRIMARY CONTACT]

Email: [EMAIL ADDRESS OF PRIMARY CONTACT]

Phone: [PHONE NUMBER OF PRIMARY CONTACT]

Address: [NON-RESIDENTIAL MAILING ADDRESS OF PRIMARY CONTACT]

TIP: *The primary contact for an application can be a local employer, an education leader, a civic leader or other responsible individual. The application review committee may need to contact this individual with any questions about the application.*

Letters of Support—Attach up to ten letters of support to the email with your completed application. There is no required number of letters of support. Each letter should come from a representative of a partnering organization. Writers could include mayor, school district superintendent, school district board president or chairperson, university administrator, employer, chamber of commerce director, technology center superintendent, advisory council president, etc.

TIP: *Scan each signed letter in PDF format and attach the PDF files to the email with the MS Word application document.*

NOTES ON THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

A state-level committee of workforce development advocates reviews each application and uses a rubric to determine its completeness.

The rubric helps to ensure that each application receives a thorough and consistent review. Successful applications will be notified whether certification has been granted. No fee is involved with the application process. During the review process, members of the review committee may decide to contact the community/region primary contact person about any questions.

The listed primary contact person will receive feedback via email about the status of the application submitted.

Communication about a final Center for Workforce Excellence designation is the responsibility of ODCTE with notification also being sent to the governor and the secretary of commerce and workforce development.

Contact the Resource Center for CareerTech Advancement:
resourcecenter@careertech.ok.gov.

LOCAL ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Each ecosystem will work to develop a structure that supports workforce development efforts in their respective areas. The structure will require an organized advisory council, industry & business engagement, identified training facilities, ecosystem analysis, industry profile, an asset map and action plans. The information below is to be used as a guide in creating the system and preparing for the Center of Excellence application process.

ADVISORY COUNCIL	DESIGNATED CONVENER	ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS	TRAINING FACILITIES	GOALS & OBJECTIVES
Each workforce ecosystem must organize a Workforce Advisory team which collaborates to create strategies that respond to local workforce needs.	The designated convener will be the entity that is responsible for organizing and leading the overall effort. The convener should have a vested stake in the process as well as the resources and capacity to assume the leadership role.	The workforce advisory committee should be comprised of stakeholders at every level. Ideally, the council will be led by business & industry. Other stakeholders include PK-12 education, Career Tech, Higher Education, workforce/employment agencies and community organizations	Each community must identify the training facilities that will be leveraged to support the workforce development system. The facilities leveraged will likely be those operated by the educational partners engaged with the workforce advisory council.	Each local workforce advisory committee will develop goals and objectives that will move the effort forward in a logical manner. The goals and objectives will be used to measure success of the group's efforts.
ECOSYSTEM ALIGNMENT	INDUSTRY ANALYSIS	EMPLOYMENT DEMAND	PATHWAYS & CREDENTIALING	TRAINING PROGRAMS
Each workforce ecosystem will work to establish an aligned system that targets the most in demand industry and employment sectors.	An industry analysis will be conducted to provide the workforce council with critical data for system alignment. The analysis will focus on the areas most prevailing industries and their workforce needs.	Data should be gathered that identifies areas of employment demand in the local area. This phase should focus on required skill sets, credentialing requirements, and potential pipeline groups.	The workforce council will collaboratively evaluate existing career pathway options and credential attainment opportunities at local educational institutions and fill gaps as necessary.	Educational providers in each local ecosystem will develop training programs that align with the identified employment demands.
TRAINING FACILITIES	PK-12	CAREER TECH DISTRICTS	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	TRADE RELATED ORGANIZATIONS
Each workforce advisory council will work to identify and leverage existing training facilities to support the system.	It is essential that the PK-12 system is an integral part of the overall system. This level will focus on career awareness, STEM programming, and skill development programs that are aligned with the overall effort.	The Career Tech system penetrates the entire state and will be an essential asset that can be utilized for the system Existing training facilities can support system training, both onsite and offsite.	Higher education institutions will be valuable in developing higher level skills sets through customized training programs, micro-credentials, and relevant degree programs	Trade related organizations can be a valuable part of the effort. These organizations have long-standing programs that provide relevant training that support trade occupations.
ASSET MAPPING	STATE AGENCIES	FEDERAL PROGRAMS	TRIBAL RESOURCES	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
Each workforce advisory council will work to develop an asset map that identifies resources that can be leveraged to support the effort.	The state of Oklahoma has many agencies in place which support employment, training and workforce development initiatives. These agencies have a variety of resources in place that can be leveraged to support training for business and individuals.	Many federal programs are in place across the state which focus on employment and workforce related efforts. These can vary from community to community but can be very valuable in providing the support to effectively execute system strategies.	Oklahoma is fortunate to have strong tribal representation across the State. These organizations have a plethora of resources that focus on employment and workforce development.	There are a variety of community related organizations that are positioned well to be a part of the workforce development system at the local level.
ACTION PLANS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
Each workforce advisory council will develop plans that provide a road map for development, execution and sustainment of the workforce system.	Each local area should establish goals that align with the overall effort of the group. These goals should be relevant, achievable and lead to successful implementation of the plan.	Objectives will be developed that help drive the achievement of the stated goals. These objectives will identify the measurable actions that will be implemented to drive success.	Strategies will be a part of the action plan that will provide engaged stakeholders with specifics on accomplishing the stated objectives.	Finally, the workforce advisory group should develop a plan of continuous improvement. This plan will include regular intervals of evaluation and sustainment of the plan.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is essential for designation as a Center of Workforce Excellence. Collaboration ensures that all available resources are leveraged for the proposed system.

Each applicant must ensure that stakeholders within the area to be served are active participants in the process. Stakeholders should include business representatives, education institutions, state agencies, community organizations, tribal governments and industry-related organizations. Applicants must provide strong evidence that the proposed system is inclusive of these stakeholders.

INDUSTRY-SECTOR FOCUS

The Oklahoma Works Together workforce plan recognizes the rural nature of the state. Flexibility is key for the Center of Excellence process to ensure local needs are met. As a result, two types of applications are available: a center of excellence that is specific to a chosen industry sector, or a center of excellence that serves multiple sectors within the workforce area.

- » **Industry-Specific Workforce Centers of Excellence:** Each application for an Industry-Specific Center of Workforce Excellence must clearly identify the primary industry sectors that will be the focus of its efforts. The sector(s) should represent the ecosystem of the workforce system to be served. The application can cater to sub-sectors if evidence is provided that the needs can be effectively met.

- » **Workforce Development Centers of Excellence:** Many communities do not have high concentrations of specific industry clusters to focus their efforts. These communities require flexibility to be broader in their approach. Applications for this category can cater their approach to a variety of workforce needs of the community or communities served but must identify the primary sectors that will be targeted.

Each designated Center will be identified in state marketing materials based on the designations described above.

ADVISORY BOARDS

Each Center of Workforce Excellence must be industry driven. Industry should be involved at the macro and micro levels of program development and management. Below is clarification of the expected role of local industry:

EXECUTIVE-LEVEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Each Center of Workforce Excellence should establish an Executive Level Advisory Committee. This committee will assume the responsibility of leading and supporting the overall effort at the local level. The majority of the membership should include decision-level leaders from the identified industry sector(s) to be targeted, as well as leadership from educational providers and other appropriate stakeholders. This industry-led group will be accountable for ensuring goals and objectives are met and will report performance to the Governor's Council as required and requested. An existing advisory group can be used for this purpose, but commitment letters should be provided to demonstrate an understanding of the expectation and the role each proposed member will contribute on the committee.

SUBJECT-LEVEL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Each Center of Workforce Excellence must identify subject matter advisory committees that will be responsible for aligning curriculum and resources at the micro-level. These individuals should be professionals who work directly in the field of focus of the Center's education and training efforts. They should have expert-level working knowledge of the careers that will be part of the Center's efforts. Members of the Executive-Level Advisory Committee could identify candidates from their organizations who would be well equipped to serve in this expert-level capacity. Existing advisory groups can be used for these committees. A list of names and titles should be provided to demonstrate expertise and alignment of skills and knowledge to the Center's goals and objectives.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Each application must provide a completed organizational chart. The chart must clearly identify the roles and responsibilities at the local level. A template of the organizational chart is provided in this Application Guide.

In addition to the organizational chart, each community should provide a detailed organizational structure. An example of this appears on page 7 of this Application Guide.

PLANNING AND PROGRESS

Each application should clearly identify the benchmarking process with identified goals and objectives and scheduled evaluations. The objective areas identified in Oklahoma Works Together are as follows:

1. ECONOMIC GROWTH—impact to local economic growth and prosperity as a Center.

Examples: jobs added, company expansion, company recruitment, ad valorem growth, sales tax growth, labor market participation rate, etc.

2. EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS—education pipeline aligns with labor market, educational preparation PK-advanced degree, educational opportunities at all levels

Examples: enrollments, industry credentials, certifications, degrees, high school equivalency (GED), articulation, career pathways, work-based learning experiences, industry-education engagement, teacher externships, etc.

3. EFFICIENCY—shared resources, accessibility

Examples: partner investments, student access to programs, streamlined processes, point of contact for engagement, alignment of local, state, federal funds to commitment of the Center

The goals identified in the application must be measurable and supported by data presented in the application. If no data is currently available, please identify the projected baseline year. *The goal evaluation will be provided to the Governor’s Workforce Council annually as a portion of the consideration for continued certification.*

APPROVALS

The standard for a Center of Workforce Excellence is high. Applications must demonstrate a sound plan and structure as outlined in this Application Guide. The minimum score for consideration is a 45 out of 50 possible points. Applications that do not meet this high standard will receive feedback that identifies each area that did not meet expectations. Applications can be re-submitted for the next round of evaluations.

The approval process will also consider whether a proposal is actively being implemented or whether it is in the early planning stages. Applications will be approved based on the status of the proposed effort as follows:

PLANNING STAGE APPROVAL:

Applications meeting expectations but still in the planning stage will receive a planning stage approval. Once the plan is considered implemented, the application can be re-submitted. When approved, the status will be updated and included in state marketing materials. The following scenarios are examples of an application that would receive Planning Stage Approval:

Executive Advisory Committee: Leadership committee outlined, membership commitments established, purpose and mission identified; yet no evidence of recent or historical activity.

Education Innovation: Partnership commitments established, sound educational alignment demonstrated, strategies, goals and objectives set; yet no recent or historical activity.

Stakeholder Engagement: Convener and stakeholders identified, roles and responsibilities set, structure of alignment demonstrated; yet no recent or historical activity.

OPERATIONAL APPROVAL:

Applications that fully meet the standards outlined in the Application Guide and that demonstrate that system strategies are being actively implemented will be provided full approval and will be included in state marketing materials. The following scenarios are examples of an application that would receive Operational Approval:

Executive Advisory Committee: Leadership committee outlined, membership commitments established, purpose and mission identified; evidence exists of recent and historical activity.

Education Innovation: Partnership commitments established, innovative educational alignment demonstrated, goals and objectives set; evidence exists of recent and historical activity.

Stakeholder Engagement: Convener and stakeholders identified, roles and responsibilities set, structure of alignment demonstrated; evidence exists of recent and historical activity.

Oklahoma Centers for Workforce Development *Application Rubric*

Applicant: _____

Reviewer: _____ Date: _____

	EXCEPTIONAL (10, 9)	ACCEPTABLE (8, 7, 6)	WORK NEEDED (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0)	SCORE / COMMENTS
Education AND Innovation	Application provides data from multiple sources detailing both education and workforce supply and demand. Data reflects a community-wide or regional focus. Identified Ecosystems. Career Awareness, Educational Attainment and supporting organizations.	Application provides limited data from multiple sources detailing both education and workforce supply and demand. Data reflects a community-wide or regional focus. Identified Ecosystems. Career Awareness, Educational Attainment and supporting organizations.	Application lacks data from multiple sources detailing both education and workforce supply and demand. Data reflects a community-wide or regional focus. Identified Ecosystems. Career Awareness, Educational Attainment and supporting organizations.	
Partnerships and Advisory Boards	Application identifies multiple existing and planned partnerships. Purpose of each partnership is stated. Education-employer partnerships evident. Connection with various entities.	Application identifies at least one existing and planned partnerships. Lacks clear purpose of each partnership. Education-employer partnerships evidence limited. Connection with no more than two entities.	Application identifies no existing or planned partnerships. No purpose for partnerships. Only connection with one entity.	
Evidence of Planning and Progress	Application states major outcomes of identified partners. Benchmarks and status of each major outcome are identified.	Application states major outcomes but offers incomplete progress benchmarks for each.	Application includes no major outcomes, benchmarks or progress indicators.	
Evidence of Promotion and Recognition	Application documents multiple promotion activities and recognition events relating to the identified partnerships and work of the center. Activities and events span the calendar year and incorporate multiple media.	Application documents promotion and recognition activities of some partnerships, but not all. Activities and events are concentrated within a narrow period during the calendar year. Use of media is limited.	Application lacks evidence of promotion activities or recognition events.	
Evidence of Planning and Progress	Application documents detailed plans or commitments to support or expand the work of identified partnerships in terms of personnel, time, funding and other resources. Documentation includes long-term targets and related expenditure commitments.	Application documents short-term commitments to identified partnerships, commitments to some but not all partnerships, or commitments of some but not all resources.	Application lacks evidence of long-term commitments to identified partnerships.	
TOTAL SCORE				_____ out of 50

