

TO: Karen Molchanow, Executive Director
State Board of Education

FROM: Consortium for Public Education and
Bureau of Career and Technical Education

DATE: May 1, 2026

SUBJECT: Adult Accreditation Metrics Committee Update and Recommendations

Executive Summary

The Consortium for Public Education (CPE) was selected as the facilitator for the work of the Advisory Committee on Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Metrics (the Committee). The team from CPE was charged with supporting committee members in developing recommendations for metrics that would enable the current Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education to be moved into regulations. A goal for this change is to strengthen the quality of adult noncredit programs across the Commonwealth and establish more consistent thresholds for measuring high quality.

The Committee met as a whole twice, with meetings on February 27, 2026, and March 20, 2026. These meetings focused on gathering input from the varied and informed perspectives of the stakeholders on the elements of high-quality programs, possible evidence of those elements, measures, and desired thresholds for those measures. Both during and outside of the meetings, committee members had opportunities to consider all aspects of adult noncredit programs and make suggestions for what would best serve the students, staff, and industry partners in terms of regulations, guidance, or best practice resources.

Their efforts were supported by extensive research and synthesis by the facilitators, which complemented their process design. See Appendix A for a list of consulted sources. Further expertise was provided by a contracted researcher, Dr. Joann Hudak (bio in Appendix B), as well as the director and a subject matter expert from PDE's Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE), Judd Pittman and Beth Marshall, respectively.

Recommendations from the Committee include consideration of 62 elements of high quality adult noncredit programs, some for regulatory language and others for guidance or best practice resources. These qualities are organized into five categories, in alignment with the reporting requirements of the US Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) Committee. This structure allows for a clear demonstration of State Board of Career and Technical Education (SBCTE's) expectations and supports the ongoing approval of SBCTE as an accrediting body.

Process

Prior to convening the Committee, CPE conducted a crosswalk of the requirements of NACIQI, Workforce Pell, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and the 2025 *Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education*. The results of this crosswalk, in consultation with the BCTE team, were used to design a broad brainstorming process for all committee members.

At the first meeting of the Committee on February 27, members of the Committee or their designees worked in four small groups to think broadly about what elements come together to make a high quality program. The committee conducted this work across the four groups with the intent to encourage input from all members while surfacing points of consensus among the membership. This initial brainstorming process encouraged participants to consider *what guidance might be helpful* to support strong adult noncredit programs before assuming that *what currently exists* encompasses everything that could serve our schools and students well. Following the broad brainstorming, committee members reviewed each drafted element of high quality, listing potential evidence that would serve as corresponding proof of each quality.

After the first meeting, CPE reviewed the drafted elements of high quality and evidence, synthesizing the inputs from all four committee working groups into a single, comprehensive list of qualities and corresponding evidence. To benchmark the committee's work, the CPE team then compared the qualities generated by the committee against the current accreditation standards and substrands listed in "Appendix B: Applicant Institution Self-Study" of the 2025 *Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education*, as well as the current standards and requirements published by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Council on Occupational Education, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, and the Pennsylvania State Board of Private Licensed Schools.

During the second committee meeting on March 20, 2026, members worked in newly configured four groups to review drafted measures and thresholds based on the qualities and evidence generated in February. Members were first tasked with debating and revising each draft measure and threshold, followed by a discussion of which qualities should be recommended for regulation, guidance, and/or best practice. Lastly, the committee reviewed their current work, flagging any potential inconsistencies or challenges related to evidence and data gathering.

Following the second synchronous meeting, CPE provided an asynchronous window for all members to share additional input on all drafted qualities, evidence, measures, and thresholds, concluding on April 1, 2026.

Upon the conclusion of this window, CPE undertook an analysis of the input and worked to synthesize the results into a cohesive set of metrics for the accreditation of adult noncredit programs either through regulation, guidance, or best practice resources.

This set of metrics was circulated to the Committee for another round of input. At this time, committee members were encouraged to consult with key stakeholders in their local ecosystems of adult noncredit programming, such as adult education directors or coordinators, administrative or instructional staff, or postsecondary or industry partners. Feedback from this round was submitted to CPE on or before April 28, 2026.

Upon a final round of editing based on the input, CPE submitted a report with the recommended metrics, as well as a set of recommendations to strengthen adult noncredit programs in Pennsylvania. These recommendations are included below.

Both the metrics and recommendations provided represent the input of the Committee with the goal of providing high quality adult noncredit programming in Pennsylvania in alignment with the requirements set forth for maintaining SBCTE's authority as an accrediting body.

Recommendations

- As outlined below, in support of high quality adult education programs, approve
 - 31 established guidelines into regulations
 - 3 new elements of high quality programs into regulations
 - 9 elements of high quality into guidance
 - 19 elements of high quality as best practices
- Maintain evidence flexibility to account for the diversity of adult programs, institutions offering adult noncredit programs, and communities.
- Look for opportunities, as PDE, to incentivize a consistent approach to adult noncredit programming across regions in order to encourage industry engagement, especially in areas with many small businesses that lack the capacity to support these efforts in a more robust way.
- Find ways to streamline data collection and analysis across systems, encouraging greater school involvement with the same or fewer administrative burdens.
- Consider the development of an on-ramp support system for schools interested in becoming accredited. Areas of focus might include documentation, funding and budgeting, articulation, and more.
- Create a document with clarifying language around what is and is not possible for accredited institutions offering adult noncredit programs (e.g., still offering non-accredited courses).
- Consider opportunities to create a defined minimum refund policy across institutions, such as the one outlined in PA Code §73.132-136.
- Work collaboratively to develop a state administrative framework to modernize and contribute to interoperable, longitudinal data that connects Perkins with

employment and related administrative data; support local institution access and utility of data to make informed decisions and monitor for continuous improvement and outcomes.

To the benefit of the Commonwealth, many of these recommendations are already under review by BCTE and connected agencies.

Elements of High Quality to be Considered for Regulation

To maintain its authority as an accrediting agency under the US Department of Education (USDE), the SBCTE must demonstrate that it holds the institutions it accredits to a high standard. The following elements of high quality are included to ensure the expectations of schools in the Commonwealth are in alignment with the requirements at the federal level. Many of the elements of high quality programs described below are currently included in the *Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education* published in October of 2025 and are organized according to those guidelines.

In a limited number of cases, the committee recommended that a federally required element of high quality should be included in guidelines and not regulation. In order to ensure that all federal requirements are met, such elements are still included in the recommended regulations below. They are marked with an asterisk (*).

To demonstrate how the committee’s work has aligned with and also expanded on the current pre-accreditation standards the table below includes the current pre-accreditation standards and substrands for context. “Category A,” “Category B,” etc. refer to the current standard categories included in the *Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education*.

Category A - Leadership	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
A1. Describe the administrative leadership in regard to adult accreditation.	<p><i>Leadership includes qualifications, succession planning, and program governance structures.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Effective leadership should be measured by the presence of a designated administrator responsible for postsecondary CTE program oversight. ● Threshold: none ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: program governance and leadership structures; JOC oversight; adult education administrator; administrative support for state reporting; meeting minutes; frequent updates to the governing board; Board reports program outcomes; attrition rates.

Category A - Leadership	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
A2. Describe the vision/ mission for adult education.	<p><i>Build a strong program culture aligned to the institution's mission.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Documented mission statements and program descriptions. ● Threshold: Mission and vision should be made public ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: mission statement; staff engagement; code of conduct; satisfaction data.
A3. Describe the meetings held to discuss adult education to include program strengths and limitations.	<p><i>Feedback loops incorporate input from advisory committees, students, and regular program assessments.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs conduct annual surveys of students, graduates, and employers. ● Threshold: Annual feedback collected from each stakeholder group ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: regularly scheduled meetings (1-2 times per year); exit survey; check-point surveys; regulated policy; authority and legal supports; adult student graduate consumer surveys; strategic plans respond to data that is collected.
	<p><i>Ensure adherence to regulations, compliance, audits, and program reviews.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs undergo periodic compliance reviews or audits. ● Threshold: Zero unaddressed compliance violations. ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: adult education meetings; meeting minutes on any issues related to students or programs.
A4. Describe how the administration team reviews the budget for adult education.	<p><i>Funding sources are diversified as part of a sustainable funding model that also includes the ability to maximize resources across budget changes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Annual financial report ● Threshold: Annual financial review/audit includes multiple funding sources or attempts to secure funding from multiple sources ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: handbook; website; audit; information provided to potential students; annual budget; grant funding; PIMS; revenue generated through grants and fees; profit and loss projections; 5-year profit and loss report; bond document (surety); enrollment cost vs. revenue.
A5. Describe how the administration team discusses and reviews the goals of adult education.	<p><i>Annual assessments should include a review of outcomes and identify opportunities for changes and improvements.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs conduct a formal annual program assessment reviewing program performance and outcomes data. ● Threshold: Evidence of continuous improvement annually ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: program assessment documents; assessment policy and procedure; regular assessment cycle; assessment completions; program objectives; goals and outcomes documented in regional and local workforce development plans.

Category A - Leadership	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
A6. Describe the administration team's evaluation, analysis, and follow up of those involved in adult education programs.	<p><i>Use state data systems (e.g., PIMS), longitudinal success tracking, and licensure/completion rate monitoring to make data-driven decisions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs conduct formal program review using outcome data. ● Threshold: Annual program review includes monitoring of credential attainment ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: annual statistical report; vertical and horizontal data sharing practices.

Category B - Program	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
B1. Describe how the institution determines the need for programs to offer to adults.	<p><i>Programs are informed by occupational advisory groups and aligned to national, state, and current industry standards.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs maintain an active occupational advisory committee with documented participation from employers representing the relevant industry sector. ● Threshold: Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC) meets at least twice a year with employer participation ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: employer surveys; OAC meeting minutes; scope & sequence; task lists; course syllabi; letters from employers; job opportunities; annual program review; advisory minutes; curriculum updates; enrollment by high-priority occupation; workforce board partnership.
B2. Describe how the program is marketing adult education to the community.	<p><i>Clear communication with stakeholders includes easily accessible program information for students.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs maintain a public website, as well as their online student portal, with required program information (costs, outcomes, admissions requirements) in accordance with Pennsylvania Act 69 of 2024. ● Threshold: 100% compliance ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: board minutes; newsletters; sample activities; social media; newsletters; career postings; PA CareerLink postings.

Category B - Program	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
B3. Describe how the institution ensures that ethical practices are followed in regard to adult education.	<p><i>Cost, accreditation status, and complaint procedures are transparent.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs publicly disclose completion rates, employment outcomes, and credential attainment rates, cost, accreditation status, and (where available) program outcomes, as well as complaint procedures. ● Threshold: 100% compliance ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: audit reports; information provided to potential students; display and disclosures to students; signed ethics statement.
B4. Describe how the adult education catalog is developed and maintained to include financial aid information.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to B4.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: The adult education catalog is reviewed and updated annually. ● Threshold: 100% compliance ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: most recent adult education catalog, including financial aid information.
B5: Describe how equipment is purchased and maintained by the institution for adult education.	<p><i>Ensure modern equipment is used in programs of study, that facilities reflect current industry standards, and equipment replacement cycles are documented.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: OAC feedback on equipment ● Threshold: Equipment inventory review conducted every five years. AND Evidence of stakeholder input by way of OAC minutes on the equipment. ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: inventory list; tour of facilities with rubric for stakeholders; OAC minutes

Category C - Students	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
C1: Describe how the adult handbook is created and distributed to adult students.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to C1.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Adult student handbook is reviewed and updated annually. ● Threshold: Annually updated student handbook ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: student handbook; meeting minutes.

Category C - Students	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
C2: Describe the adult education attendance policy.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to C2.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Adult handbook includes the attendance policy that aligns Title IV requirements. ● Threshold: Annually updated handbook. ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Student handbook.
C3: Describe the adult education grading policy.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to C3.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Adult student handbook includes the grading policy. ● Threshold: Annually updated student handbook ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: student handbook; meeting minutes.
C4: Describe how adult students become completers.	<p><i>Completion rate.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Student outcome data demonstrating percentage completion rate. Use of outcome data is shared in narrative form. ● Threshold: Verified program-specific completion rate of 70% within 150% of normal completion time ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: track enrollment cohorts (100%, 150%, 300% timeframe); tracking of why students are not retained; enrollment; completions; GED diploma; student database system; PIMS enrollment status data; longitudinal success tracking.
C5: Describe industry credentials offered to adult students.*	<p><i>Credentialing is awarded for industry recognized credentials and National Skill Standards.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Percentage of students earning an industry- recognized credential prior to or upon program completion. ● Threshold: 70% of completers earn credentials ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: certification opportunities within the curriculum; student database system; PIMS; credential at completion.
C6: Describe the curriculum of adult education programs.	<p><i>Adult programs have a high emphasis on practical interactive skills training, competency benchmarks, and maintaining rigor while scaffolding instruction.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Percentage of courses including documented competency- based performance assessments aligned to occupational tasks. ● Threshold: ≥75% of courses include competency assessments ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Syllabi; equipment and facilities interactive skills training; lab simulations/ project-based learning/ scenario-based instruction; skills demonstration results; real world examples; competency task lists.

Category C - Students	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
C7. Describe the institution's remediation process for adult students.*	<p><i>Program offers tutoring (live or virtual), ELL supports, and individualized goal setting.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Student-to-academic support staff ratio. ● Threshold: ≤150 students per academic support staff member ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: differentiated instructional evidence; student goal setting; student portfolio; live or virtual tutoring opportunities; ELL supports; special education resources; adult student learner orientation.
C8. Describe the complaint/grievance procedures for adult students.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to C8.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Average time required to acknowledge and resolve student complaints. ● Threshold: Complaint resolution process completed within 45 days ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: A written policy available with a user friendly form for submission by a student on the school's website.
C9. Describe special awards given to adult students.*	<p><i>Hosting completion events and "signing celebrations" with employers to create significance and pride.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs host annual completion or recognition events for graduates. ● Threshold: At least one event per program cohort ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: scheduled events; invitations; certificates; signing events; event attendance tracking/fulfills purpose; post-event reflection.
C10. Describe how adult student satisfaction/dissatisfaction is evaluated and acted upon.	<p><i>Includes alumni opportunities and sharing success stories.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Programs conduct graduate follow-up surveys to track employment outcomes. ● Threshold: Follow-up conducted within 12 months of completion ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Survey available on the institution website; survey distributed to participants at the end of every program; a report on the survey response for each program provided to PDE or to the State Board of Education.

Category D - Faculty/Staff Facilities	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
D1. Describe the faculty/staff employed at the institution in regard to adult education.	<p><i>Faculty positions require significant industry experiences (e.g., 5+ years), relevant certifications, and real-world subject matter knowledge.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Relevant degrees and/or industry credential and 2-3 years' experience in the field; these should align with 22 Pa. Code: § 73.102. Director and Acting Director, § 73.103. Educational supervisor, § 73.104. Instructor, § 73.105. Assistant instructor, § 73.106. Laboratory and shop aide. ● Threshold: ≥80% of instructors meet qualification criteria ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Interview/selection criteria & questions; aligned instructor license/permit/certification; resume/CV; instructor evaluations; certification records/credential verification as identified by PDE; degree/experience in the occupation; job descriptions.
D2. Describe how the institution recruits faculty/staff for adult education.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to D2.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Fair and impartial employment practices, including all phases of hiring, evaluation, promotion, and separation, with appropriate attention to diversity. ● Threshold: None ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Advertisements; qualifications; job descriptions; teaching demonstration; background checks.
D3. Describe how new instructors are oriented on adult education.	<p><i>On-boarding designed to provide necessary information to new faculty and staff in a way that is understood/digested by the employee.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: All new hires participate in orientation through completion. ● Threshold: 100% compliance ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Model lesson plans and task lists; opportunities to co-teach with veteran teacher; rubrics; gradual release model; mastery tracking; teacher pairs/trios; mentorship (with daytime teachers when possible); facilities overview; onboarding checklist.
D4. Describe professional development opportunities given to adult education instructors.	<p><i>Continuous coaching and professional development should be provided to help industry experts become effective teachers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Annual professional development hours per instructor. ● Threshold: Documentation that a minimum of 5 professional development hours are completed and tracked annually for each instructor as it relates to their industry and/or instructional practices. ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: PD Calendar; annual training plan; PD logs; partnerships to inform or provide PD; coaching cycles; current CTE teachers modeling lessons; participation in opportunities offered or approved by by SBHE.

Category D - Faculty/Staff Facilities	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
D5. Describe how adult education faculty/staff are evaluated.	<p><i>Evaluation cycles and feedback.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Percentage of instructors meeting or exceeding proficiency annually based on indicators determined by the school. ● Threshold: ≥75% of instructors are rated “satisfactory” or distinguished within an annual reporting cycle ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Evaluation cycles/feedback; employee/staff interviews; surveys; reflections; teacher observations.
D6. Describe how facilities are maintained in regard to adult education.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to D6.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Documented facility maintenance plan for adult education instructional spaces, including scheduled inspections and repair procedures, and percentage of instructional spaces that meet current occupational training requirements and accessibility standards. ● Threshold: 100% compliance or facility and equipment inventory reviewed annually ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Facility maintenance procedures; facility reviews; certificate of occupancy; program needs and quantity available
D7. Describe what steps are taken to ensure safety in the institution.	<p><i>[Not explicitly defined by committee. Recommend using language similar to D7.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Institutions maintain documented institutional safety policies, including emergency response procedures and safety training requirements. ● Threshold: Annual safety training required for all staff, and emergency procedures reviewed annually ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Formal safety policies and training procedures reviewed by the Program Advisory Committee.

Category E - Employers	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
E1: Describe how the institution works with employers in regard to adult education.	<p><i>Programs include authentic work-based experiences, shadowing, and practical applications built into every level.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Presence of career readiness opportunities within the course scope and sequence - can include items listed under committee evidence. ● Threshold: none ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Externships/internships/clinicals; employer guest instruction; mock interviews/guest speakers; employment - meeting employers’ needs.

Category E - Employers	
Current Guidelines	Committee Recommendations for Regulation
E2: Describe how employers are beneficial to the OAC in regard to adult education.	<p><i>Sustainable community and industry partnerships, as well as involvement with regional workforce development planners, are an ongoing part of adult programs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Number of active employer partnerships supporting training, placement, or advisory activities. ● Threshold: ≥5 active employer partners per program ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Community and employer input and engagement; employer/student/instructor satisfaction surveys; active CTC participation in IPs/ Workforce board presence
E3: Describe how employers give feedback on adult education students they hire.	<p><i>Employer input</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: % of employer partners providing feedback per year ● Threshold: ≥50% employer partners provide feedback via annual survey or committee meeting ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Employer surveys; employer feedback on graduates; advisory committee notes; OAC meeting minutes

Additional Elements of High Quality to be Considered for Regulation

The Committee identified some additional elements of high quality that they felt should be moved to regulation. The following elements are not currently included in the *Accreditation Guidelines for Pennsylvania Public Postsecondary Career and Technical Education*.

Additional Elements of High Quality (3 total)
<p>Committee Recommendations for Regulation</p> <p><i>Programs feature stackable micro- credentials, career pathway maps, and connections to degree or apprenticeship articulations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Provides evidence of internal stackability or external transferability or evidence of sole recognized post- secondary credential. ● Threshold: Provides evidence of internal stackability or external transferability consistent with the PA Workforce Pell 2026-27 Stackable and Portable Credential Policy ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: data from a past year collected in reporting system - transfer rates; looking to see that schools have: articulation agreements for further education, registered apprenticeship certifications/CATS; annual reports; career pathway maps or transition plans.
<p><i>Placement rate or alignment to regional high-demand occupations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measure: Student outcome data demonstrating % placement rate. ● Threshold: A verified job placement rate of at least 70%, measured 180 days after completion in a job related to the program of study ● Evidence such as, but not limited to: Student surveys; follow-up with graduates; confirmed placement (self-collected, L&I); employer MOUs; job placement agreements; job

placement tracking; employer follow-up; placement verification forms; employer endorsement letters of the need for training; job adds or occupational demand for the place or region the training is being delivered; employer letters of commitment to hire/interview candidates.

Adequate refund policies and student records repositories.

- **Measure:** Programs maintain and publish documented refund policies and student record retention policies consistent with state requirements.
- **Threshold:** Required compliance for all participants to receive this information
- **Evidence such as, but not limited to:** Policy available on the website; policy distributed to the student; policy to be in the enrollment agreement; policy published in the catalog

Elements of High Quality Recommended for Updated Guidelines

The following elements of high quality programs were identified by the committee as useful guidelines, but not recommended for regulation.

Guidelines (9 total)

Committee Recommendations for Accreditation Guidelines

- Request for a resource that identifies optimal frequency and reporting to the governing board.
- Regarding annual assessments of program outcomes and improvements, guidelines should include information about how to share this information with stakeholders.
- Regarding the recruitment of faculty/staff for adult education: incorporate guidance requiring the institution to conduct background checks and follow other appropriate hiring practices.
- Request for a resource for institutions to aid in addressing major challenges in retraining.
- Programs should be labor-market driven, adaptable to demand, and include feedback loops with industry to keep curriculum current.
- Regarding curriculum: Programs focus on relevance to learners, considering adult learning models and the integration of employability skills.
- Program includes job placement assistance, work search advising, and active employer relationships
- Guidelines should include information for conducting background checks and other appropriate hiring practices.
- Guidelines should include resources for addressing the major challenges in retraining staff.

Elements of High Quality Recommended as Best Practices

These following elements of high quality programs were identified by the committee as useful best practices, but not recommended for regulation.

Best Practices (19 total)
Committee Recommendations for Program Best Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The designated [adult programs] administrator should report to the school's board or governing body.• Roles and responsibilities for adult program administrators should be clearly outlined.• Mission statements should be reviewed annually.• Regarding budgets, include a cost v. revenue statement with benchmarks in the annual report.• PDE should provide program exemplars as a resource to schools.• ROI of program: Aim for Workforce Pell Value-Added Formula: "The difference between the median earnings of such students receiving federal financial aid who completed the program and 150% of the federal poverty line (FPL) for a single individual, adjusted for the geographic location of the institution offering the program." Value-added earnings should be greater than the cost of program tuition and fees.• Program provides connections to resources like transportation, childcare, emergency funds, and food/water access. Program maintains formal referral partnerships for services such as transportation, childcare, housing, or emergency aid.• Staff retention should aim to have $\geq 75\%$ of staff retained year to year, supported by recruitment and retention plans and interviews with staff.• Regarding the orientation of new instructors, provide information about a Lead Instructor position as a person responsible for onboarding new instructors, as well as a resource a checklist of everything the new instructor will need to know SMS, attendance grades etc. that could be used by whoever is responsible for onboarding as well as the new hire.• Professional development opportunities for adult education instructors should include trainings in adult learning theory, trauma-informed practices, and differentiated instruction to support varied learners, with a goal of having $\geq 75\%$ of instructors complete PD every three years.• Regarding advisory groups: employers sign a contract regarding participation and engagement on a committee and include the local workforce development board on the advisory committee.• Regarding ethical practices: Submit a signed ethics statement when applying to be accredited and during the school's accreditation renewal process. (See 22 PA Code §73.112 for Private Licensed Schools for example.)• Minimum number of months that a program must be in operation prior to accreditation.• Regarding curriculum: Digital literacy is integrated, and consideration is given to the impact of AI on industries in the future.• Regarding remediation: Leverage evidence based practices for specific needs and

align proven practices to maximize student growth.

- Regarding the grievance/complaint procedure: Complaint/grievance procedure clearly defines the individuals to contact, any relative timelines, means of reporting, and alternatives in the event they are still unsatisfied.
- Ensure that flexible access is a priority and it adheres to industry standards for the training.
- Regarding onboarding staff: Information regarding a Lead Instructor position as a person responsible for onboarding new instructors, as well as a resource checklist of everything the new instructor will need to know SMS, attendance grades etc. that could be used by whoever is responsible for onboarding as well as the new hire.
- Regarding instruction: Pedagogy incorporates adult learning theory, trauma-informed practices, and differentiated instruction to support varied learners.

Areas Lacking Consensus

Throughout the process, there were some areas where committee members did not come to an agreement. These areas concerned:

- Minimum operation requirements: The committee looked for alignment of the minimum operating requirements to Workforce Pell requirements. However, they felt that such a requirement for initial accreditation would be much of a burden. A point of additional discussion would be to explore a probationary period for instructors of new programs to more closely evaluate the effectiveness of the instructor in alignment with the program goals and student outcomes over the initial 12 months of a program. Because programs are audited annually, this would open doors for financial assistance while holding the instructor and institution accountable for delivering results.
- Flexible access as it relates to clock hours, credit hours, attendance, and Title IV funding: There is a lack of consistent understanding around the reasoning behind credit hour courses can do distance learning and clock hour courses cannot, which is a barrier on offering flexible programs (e.g., hybrid with theory online and practical application in-person). Title IV requirements play a significant role in how committee members interpret challenges inherent in these kinds of offerings. A point of additional conversation is warranted around creating a common understanding of how these opportunities can be expanded to the benefit of students and industry, while maintaining integrity in following federal requirements.

Appendix A: Resources Used in Research

“22 Pa. Code Chapter 73. General Provisions.” *Pennsylvania Code*, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,

https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/secure/pacode/data/022/chapter73/022_0073.pdf.

Accessed 30 April 2026.

Accreditation Guidelines for Oklahoma Public Postsecondary Career and Technology Education. Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Jan. 2026,

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Appendix B: Biography for Joann Hudak, Ed.D., Researcher

Joann Hudak, Ed.D., is a senior education consultant with more than 35 years of experience in public education and workforce development in Pennsylvania. Her career includes roles as a teacher, building principal, director of secondary education, and assistant superintendent, where she led system-wide initiatives focused on student achievement, career readiness, and organizational improvement.

Throughout her tenure as a school and district leader, Dr. Hudak supported the development and expansion of career and technical education pathways, strengthening connections between secondary education, post-secondary opportunities, and regional workforce needs.

Dr. Hudak has worked with state and national organizations to strengthen career and technical education systems, including her previous role as a Senior Education Consultant with YouScience and as Project Director with the National Center for College and Career Transitions. She has partnered extensively with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Career and Technical Education to support research, program development, and leadership facilitation, including her work since 2018 supporting adult CTE initiatives through the Bureau's Technical Assistance Program (TAP).

She is also a founding member and Board Chair of the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance, where she works with education, industry, and community partners to strengthen workforce development efforts and expand access to career pathways in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Her work focuses on building high-quality career pathways, strengthening alignment between education and workforce systems, and advancing equitable access to career-connected learning opportunities for all learners.

Appendix C: Acronym Guide

AI: Artificial Intelligence

BCTE: Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Career and Technical Education

CATS: Career and Technical Education Information System

CPE: Consortium for Public Education

CTC: Career and Technical Center

CTE: Career and Technical Education

CV: Curriculum Vitae

ELL: English Language Learner

FPL: Federal Poverty Line

GED: General Education Development test for high school equivalency

HPO: High Priority Occupation

IDOL: In-Demand Occupation List

L&I: Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry

LMI: Labor Market Information

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NACIQI: US Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity

OAC: Occupational Advisory Committee

PAC: Program Advisory Committee

PD: Professional Development

PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education

PIMS: Pennsylvania Information Management System

SBCTE: Pennsylvania State Board of Career and Technical Education

SBHE: Pennsylvania State Board of Higher Education

SMS: Student Management System

UDL: Universal Design for Learning

USDE: US Department of Education