

# Virginia Association for Career and Technical Education (Virginia ACTE) Priorities for Education and Workforce Initiatives, 2025-2026

Virginia secondary and postsecondary educators, business representatives, and organizations representing career and technical education (CTE) professions contribute to the development of Virginia ACTE's priorities. Virginia ACTE welcomes comments from citizens, students, parents, and members of the boards that share our vision of providing opportunities for all Virginia students.

## IN BRIEF

**Sustaining Virginia's CTE Resource Center:** Virginia ACTE supports additional funding to ensure the CTE Resource Center's budget keeps pace with increased operating costs and continues its work in promoting career readiness through the development and implementation of curriculum aligned with evolving industry standards and workforce needs.

**Increasing State-Level Funding for Virginia's Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs):** Virginia ACTE supports additional funding to support the operation of CTSOs at the state level. Virginia CTE students are served through DECA, Educators Rising, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, SkillsUSA and TSA. As membership in these CTSOs has increased, with students now allowed to join without being enrolled in a CTE course, the support they receive has not kept up.

**Increasing Funding for High-Quality Work-based Learning (WBL):** Virginia ACTE supports funding that would expand the hiring of WBL coordinators, who will ensure high-quality WBL (HQWBL) opportunities such as registered apprenticeship programs and clinical experiences for students and aligned with high-demand and high-wage jobs.

**Increasing Funding for Classroom and Lab Equipment:** Virginia ACTE supports additional funding for CTE classroom lab equipment and program growth, as well as funding for integrated CTE curricula and specialized equipment for Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies, to prepare students for a competitive workforce and for postsecondary education and training.

**Increasing Funding for Industry Credentials, Equipment, and Testing:** Virginia ACTE supports increased funding for industry-recognized credentials, course alignment, standards and assessments, and increased dual enrollment and articulation agreements for postsecondary opportunities to strengthen CTE programs, develop staff, and prepare students for the workforce.

**Tackling the CTE Teacher Shortage:** Virginia ACTE supports reducing barriers to teaching licensure and certifications for qualified industry professionals seeking to teach relevant CTE courses, to ensure our students are adequately provided with knowledgeable, experienced, and capable instructors with real-world experience in high-demand and high-wage industries.

**Expanding Technical Career Exploration and CTE Program Awareness in Fifth Grade:** Virginia ACTE supports expanding elementary school CTE awareness and initiatives that promote interest in, and educate students about, secondary programs and postsecondary career opportunities.

## RECOMMENDATION – Sustaining Virginia’s CTE Resource Center

***Virginia ACTE supports additional funding to ensure the CTE Resource Center budget keeps pace with increased operating costs and continues its work in promoting career readiness through the development and implementation of curriculum aligned with evolving industry standards and workforce needs.***

### Rationale

Virginia ACTE supports the continued and inflationary matching funding to sustain Virginia’s CTE Resource Center and its work that promotes career readiness through the integration of secondary CTE curricula with Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) and alignment with industry and professional standards and industry certifications.

The CTE Resource Center’s website is the primary distribution point for all CTE curriculum for Virginia’s public school CTE administrators and educators. The CTE Resource Center and its services and resources are free to all CTE educators in Virginia. The CTE Resource Center’s website is the source for comprehensive information about credentials offered to Virginia students that are aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and the 3E Readiness Framework.

- New work in support of the 3E Readiness Framework:
  - CTE curriculum and outcome alignment with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) 3E Readiness Framework
  - Employment: alignment of courses to high-demand occupations
  - Enlistment: Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) credential alignment with courses
  - Enrollment: alignment of courses with plans of study for postsecondary education
- CTE Resource Center state funding (line item) was \$400,000 per year in the 2008-2009 biennial budget:
  - CTE Resource Center state funding was cut by 35% in FY 2009-2010 and a further 38% in FY 2010-2011, leaving state funding at \$248,021.
  - The General Assembly restored \$50,000 of the funding in FY 2012, with funding staying at a flat level of \$298,021 through FY 2024. In today’s dollars, that funding would be approximately \$445,000.
  - For FY 2025, the General Assembly reinstated \$200,000 per year to the Center’s annual line item, less than the \$400,000 per year requested.
- Continual work in support of Virginia’s public school CTE programs:
  - The CTE Resource Center supports regular reviews of CTE curriculum and alignment with SOL, national and state standards, credentials, and more.
  - The CTE Resource Center maintains more than 450 unique CTE courses, with input from business and industry and teacher review committees, and provides supplemental resources, including course sequences and student competency

records that allow teachers to track mastery of concepts.

- The CTE Resource Center catalogs, updates, and houses information on more than 650 Virginia Board of Education-approved industry credentials, including the provider, cost, and accommodations, for teachers, administrators, and students in public school divisions.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations to support college and career readiness and sustained funding for the CTE Resource Center:***

1. *The General Assembly should restore funding by \$200,000 to \$698,021 to sustain the work of the CTE Resource Center.*
2. *The General Assembly should continue to provide permanent line-item funding to the CTE Resource Center.*

**RECOMMENDATION – Increase State-Level Funding for Virginia’s career and technical student organizations (CTSOs).**

***Students enrolled in CTE courses are members of a local CTSO related to their courses and areas of interest and are provided with opportunities to apply academic, technical and employability knowledge and skills necessary in today’s workforce. Virginia CTE students are served through DECA, Educators Rising, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, SkillsUSA and TSA. Currently Virginia has approximately 80,000 CTE students as members of the state and national organization.***

**Rationale**

- Improved academic and technical skills: Participation in CTSOs is linked to higher graduation rates, improved academic performance, and increased student engagement. CTSOs integrate academic concepts with hands-on, contextual learning experiences, making classroom lessons more relevant for students and enhancing their understanding of theoretical concepts. This leads to strengthened academic and technical skills, which are essential for success in today’s workforce. **Economic impact:** Investing in CTSOs supports Virginia’s economy by cultivating a highly skilled workforce that meets current and future employer demands.
- **Equity and access:** Additional funding ensures all students, regardless of background, have access to CTSO activities, competitions, and leadership opportunities.
- Leadership and professional development: CTSOs offer opportunities for students to develop leadership skills through events, competitions, and professional development programs. This includes improving communication, time management, self-confidence, and teamwork abilities—qualities that employers highly value.
- Career exploration and guidance: CTSOs provide students with specific career guidance and opportunities to explore career pathways within their chosen field. They offer real-world application of classroom learning and expose students to industry professionals, helping them refine career objectives and make informed decisions.

- Enhanced workforce readiness: CTSOs bridge classroom learning with real-world experience– combining academics with practical skills, leadership development, and professional networking–to ensure students are career ready upon graduation. Students who participate in CTSOs are more likely to have a clearer understanding of their desired career path and exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement.
- Career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) are an integral part of a student's instructional program and CTE experience. They provide opportunities for skill and leadership development and career exploration.
- Support for federal CTE goals: CTSOs support the goals of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), which provides federal support for CTE programs, by improving student achievement, strengthening connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and addressing the needs of business and industry. Increased funding for CTSOs aligns with Perkins V goals and contributes to a skilled workforce.

***Virginia ACTE recommends the following to support our CTSOs at the state level with a focus on workforce development, economic growth, and student success.***

1. *The General Assembly should increase funding by \$481,043 each fiscal year, bringing total funding to \$1.2 million each year to support the functions, activities and oversight of Virginia's CTSOs.*
2. *The General Assembly should make this a permanent line item for Virginia's CTSOs.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for High-Quality Work-Based Learning**

***Virginia ACTE supports funding that would expand the hiring of high-quality work-based learning (HQWBL) coordinators, who will ensure HQWBL opportunities for CTE students, and to align these opportunities with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.***

### **Rationale**

- Work-based learning refers to a collection of on-the-job experiences undertaken in partnership with local companies or organizations. Working with the VDOE's Office of Career and Technical Education, and also our regional workforce councils throughout the commonwealth, HQWBL opportunities in CTE are coordinated at the state, regional, and local (school division) levels and aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate (8VAC20-131-70).
- These HQWBL experiences enable CTE students to apply classroom instruction; enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes; develop workplace skills; and experience a given career while in a real-world work environment.
- Employers increasingly seek new hires who have HQWBL experiences. CTE students who participate in HQWBL experiences often work for their placement companies after high

school—or even college—graduation. Virginia recognizes six HQWBL methods of instruction: registered apprenticeship, internship, supervised agricultural experience, entrepreneurship, clinical experience, and school-based enterprise.

- Schools must increase HQWBL opportunities for CTE students. Coordinators in each school division are necessary to build relationships with the local and regional business community, screen and match qualified CTE students to HQWBL experiences in line with their career goals and interests, and oversee the school division's HQWBL program.
- These coordinators are a critical link between the classroom and the business community.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendation to assist school divisions and the business community in providing HQWBL opportunities for CTE students:***

1. *Provide state funding for the implementation of HQWBL coordinators in all school divisions to support opportunities to strengthen Virginia's future workforce.*
2. *Expand teacher professional learning options among higher education partners for coursework and certifications in HQWBL.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for Classroom and Lab Equipment**

***Virginia ACTE supports funding for CTE classroom lab equipment and program expansion, as well as funding for the integrated CTE curricula and specialized equipment in Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies, to prepare students for a competitive workforce and for postsecondary education and training.***

### **Rationale**

- School divisions have multiple CTE programs requiring equipment and labs that must be updated regularly to meet industry standards.
- The General Assembly funding has Virginia's CTE classrooms equipped with the technology and materials that students will use in the workplace. General Assembly funds are distributed among 131 school divisions and 1,151 secondary schools and local and regional centers. These funds are used to provide project-based and industry-relevant educational experiences.
- The 2022 General Assembly flat-funded CTE equipment at \$1.8 million, with a base allocation of \$2,000 per school division, with the remainder distributed based on CTE student enrollment.
- The 2022 General Assembly provided a supplemental \$600,000 in competitive innovation program grants for in-demand, fast-growth industry sectors, with priority given to state-identified challenged schools and the Governor's STEM Academies and the Governor's Health Sciences Academies.
- The General Assembly allocated \$1.4 million for equipment in high-skill, in-demand, and fast-growth industry sectors as identified by the Virginia Board of Workforce Development, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Virginia Employment Commission.

- For each school-based CTE program, the average cost for equipment and software updates ranges from \$60,000 per program (e.g., Teachers for Tomorrow) to more than \$250,000 per program (e.g., Automotive Technology).
- Virginia's technical workforce is critical but is experiencing shortages of qualified, skilled workers. Virginia's public schools can help close the skills gap through adequately funded CTE programs.
- Students perform better when they learn academic skills applied to real-world settings in CTE programs.
- Secondary CTE programs build on elementary STEM experiences and integrate STEM, using competency- and team-based instruction that encourages critical thinking and problem solving.
- Governor's STEM Academies, Governor's Health Sciences Academies, and other STEM initiatives relevant to all CTE programs are growing:
  - Twenty-one Governor's STEM Academies expand options for students to acquire STEM literacy and technical skills while earning an industry credential.
  - Nine Governor's Health Sciences Academies represent partnerships between public school divisions, public- and private-sector healthcare institutions, and institutions of higher education to deliver rigorous programs that result in effective career preparation, with students earning relevant certifications and credentials.
- There is a need to provide reliable, sustainable, and identifiable funding for the Governor's STEM Academies to update labs to keep pace with changing curricula and to provide rigorous and relevant programs of study based on rapidly evolving industry needs.

***Virginia ACTE recommends the following to strengthen Virginia's CTE programs:***

1. *Increase funding for CTE equipment by \$1 million to \$2.8 million.*
2. *Continue funding for CTE expansion to meet the demands of high-skill, in-demand, and fast-growth industry sectors.*
3. *Increase funding for equipment and software updates for credentialing assessments required by industry standards.*
4. *Increase funding for Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies using sustainable, reliable funding streams.*
5. *Recognize CTE as an integral component of K–12 STEM initiatives and acknowledge CTE's unique ability to provide STEM instruction in secondary schools.*
6. *Increase funding for competitive innovation program grants to support current and future Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for Industry Credentials, Equipment, and Testing**

***Virginia ACTE supports continued funding for industry-recognized standards, assessments, and credentials to strengthen CTE programs, develop staff, and prepare students for the workforce.***

### **Rationale**

- Virginia employment projections suggest 500,000 new jobs will be created by 2026. As employers seek to fill these jobs, they rely on industry-recognized credentials as evidence of workers' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Virginia's future workforce must be ready for new growth opportunities in high-tech, high-growth industries.
- Virginia's high school students earned 147,481 credentials in the 2023-2024 school year. The Profile of a Virginia Graduate broadens student opportunities to earn a credential beginning with the graduating class of 2022.
- Credentialing assessments have been flat funded for the past four years. Funding is divided among 131 school divisions, which serve over 1.25 million high school students.
- In previous years, these assessments cost over \$5.4 million, while the state funding allocation was only \$3.9 million. School divisions had to use over \$1.5 million in local funding to meet the shortfall. Requested funding would allow school divisions to encourage more students to pursue industry-recognized credentials.
- Virginia's Standards of Quality state, "Career and technical education programs shall be aligned with industry and professional standard certifications, where they exist." (Code of Virginia §22.1-253.13:1B) The College, Career, and Civic Readiness section of the Virginia School Quality Profiles documents these earned industry credentials.
- The 2022 General Assembly funded
  - more than \$1.8 million for industry certification examinations, licensure tests, and occupational-competency examinations
  - \$308,655 for the Workplace Readiness Skills assessment and other board-approved industry certifications
  - \$500,000 for industry credentialing for students and professional development for instructors in STEM-health and CTE programs
  - \$1.3 million for information-technology industry credentials.
- Section 22.1-298.1 of the Code of Virginia was amended in 2015 to state: "Every teacher seeking an initial licensure with an endorsement in career and technical education shall have an industry certification credential in the area in which the teacher seeks endorsement. If the teacher has not attained an industry certification credential, the Board may, upon request of the employing school division or educational agency, issue the teacher a provisional license to allow time for the teacher to attain such credential."

### **Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations:**

1. *Increase 2023's funding for credentialing assessments by \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million.*



2. *Increase funding for credentialing assessments to help students complete industry certifications, occupational competency exams, Workplace Readiness Skills assessments, state licensures, and other high-quality assessments, as approved by the Virginia Board of Education, as a part of their secondary CTE studies, Standard Diploma requirements, and the Profile of a Virginia Graduate requirement.*
3. *Continue funding for CTE teachers to attain Virginia Board of Education approved, industry-recognized certifications.*
4. *Support and expand credentialing initiatives at the secondary-education level and recognize the importance of secondary-education credentialing initiatives for success at the postsecondary level and for career readiness.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Tackling the CTE Teacher Shortage**

***Virginia ACTE supports reducing barriers to teaching licensure and certifications for qualified, industry professionals seeking to teach relevant CTE courses, to ensure our students are adequately provided with knowledgeable, experienced, and capable instructors with real-world experience in high demand and high wage industries.***

### **Rationale**

- Virginia continues to experience a critical shortage of qualified teachers, especially in its most challenged schools and in technical subject areas.
- CTE is ranked eighth in Virginia’s 2025-2026 top-10 list of critical teacher shortage areas. CTE has been included in this listing since 2003-2004. School divisions increasingly have difficulty finding qualified CTE teachers; the shortage is predicted to worsen over the next five years.
- The National Science Foundation and the Virginia Office of Education Economics identified middle school and high school CTE teacher positions as important STEM professions.
- Demand for CTE teachers and programs is increasing:
  - Enrollment during 2023-2024 totaled more than 708,337 (this count includes cases where a student is counted more than once if they enrolled in more than one CTE course).
  - Workplace Readiness Skills (taught in all CTE courses) are a priority for Virginia’s employers.
  - Teachers in four CTE program areas (Agricultural Education, Business and Information Technology, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Marketing) comprise the largest number of instructors endorsed to teach Economics and Personal Finance, a graduation requirement for all Virginia students. Students in these courses score highest on average in the end-of-course W!SE Financial Literacy Certification Test.

***Virginia needs highly qualified CTE teachers to meet increasing demand. Teacher preparation***



***programs at Virginia's colleges and universities, community colleges, as well as special initiatives offer some solutions to these shortages, but more needs to be done.***

- The Appropriation Act requires the VDOE to report annually to the General Assembly on the critical teaching shortage areas in Virginia. Each year since 2016, CTE has been included as a critical-shortage teaching discipline, allowing students enrolled in approved undergraduate or graduate teacher programs to apply for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations to strengthen and expand Virginia's supply of highly qualified CTE teachers:***

1. The Virginia Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) should prioritize support for teacher-education programs in CTE in Virginia's colleges and universities to encourage a supply of highly qualified teachers.
2. The career-switcher programs should require rigorous pedagogy instruction, realistic endorsement requirements with relevant certifications, and professional experience.
3. Funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program should be increased, with a portion of these funds set aside to target CTE teacher-shortage areas.
4. The SCHEV and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) should endorse the Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow program as a dual-enrollment community college course with credits eligible for transfer to postsecondary teacher-education programs.

## **RECOMMENDATION – Expand Technical Career Exploration and CTE Program Awareness in Fifth Grade.**

***Virginia ACTE supports expanding elementary school CTE awareness and opportunities consisting of initiatives that promote interest and educate students on secondary programs and postsecondary career pathways.***

### **Rationale**

- Younger learners have a limited view of possible careers, restricted to the professionals they encounter or the careers of parents, parents' friends, and friends' parents.
- Today's students will revise or reorient their career pathways multiple times, and they need a modern toolkit beginning in grades K-5.
- Integrating college and career awareness in elementary school instruction helps students imagine and explore careers in the context of their curricula and supports the decisions they make in middle and high school course selections.

**Virginia ACTE recommends the expansion of elementary school CTE opportunities:**

1. *Expose students in K-5 to a broad exploration of career pathways.*
2. *Increase the participation of business and industry partners in K-5 career awareness.*

***Affiliated Organizations***

Virginia Association for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences

Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators

Virginia Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators

Virginia Association of Marketing Educators

Virginia Association of Trade and Industrial Educators

Virginia Association of Career and Technical Education–Special Populations Division

Virginia Business Education Association

Virginia Health and Medical Science Educators Association

Virginia Technology and Engineering Education Association

Virginia Work-Based Learning

Division of Virginia Counseling and Career Development

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