

AAFCS Responds to the Publication of a Modernized Career Clusters Framework

AAFCS joins the Alliance for FCS & other associations that support CTE to voice its concerns about the recently published Modernized Career Clusters Framework.

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The Framework was published on October 21, 2024, by Advance CTE, a Maryland based nonprofit. The revised framework is meant to support states as they implement, manage, and oversee career and technical education

(CTE) programs and report learner participation data to the federal government in accordance with the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), published in 2018.

Research has found that participating in CTE in high school has significant, positive impacts on academic achievement, high school completion, employability skills, college readiness, the likelihood of enrolling in a community or technical college after high school, and employment. And Perkins V provides federal funding to support states as they implement such programs; recognizing that CTE positively impacts learners and their future career opportunities.

By identifying clusters of similar careers (e.g., [career clusters](#)), states can more easily develop CTE programs including teacher certification and/or licensure requirements for each cluster, instructional standards, and credentialing for learners. Learners and adults can use the clusters to identify careers of interest and develop a plan for future education or employment in pursuit of those career aspirations. Industries can work with schools to support those clusters that lead to employment in those industries, providing experts, resources, and more. And communities benefit directly through increases in high-skilled workers and employment rates.

Upon review of the newly published Framework, it is the view of the [AAFCS](#) that the published Advance CTE Career Clusters Framework fails to adequately represent the full spectrum of careers that contribute to a robust and effective economy, as it overlooks critical fields and



industries that are essential for economic growth and sustainability.

Throughout the development of the new Framework, Advance CTE has failed to offer transparency to stakeholders by releasing survey results and summaries of stakeholder group discussions, and to define the requirements to be identified as a cluster, industry, and cross-cutting. Several career and technical education pathways (i.e., programs of study) have been included as cross-cutting, when they do not touch all other programs, others have been left out entirely when they do.

“AAFCS and other Family and Consumer Sciences organizations including the Alliance for FCS met with Advance CTE numerous times, participated in review groups, and our membership submitted thousands of survey responses including industry and career data to Advance CTE. Considering the size and breadth of our industry, the numerous career opportunities and pathways available to learners taking FCS courses, and our industry-backed standards, certifications, and accredited programs, the AAFCS and others are at a loss as to Advance CTE’s reasoning for excluding such an important career cluster, which has been around for over 100 years. Being left out of the Framework yet again is not surprising, considering Family and Consumer Sciences has been discriminated against and trivialized for years. It’s just unfortunate that Advance CTE missed this opportunity to implement a fair, impartial Framework that is backed by research and data and puts the learner first. AAFCS will continue to work with our members, schools, states, industry, and our Alliance members to support Family and Consumer Sciences as a Career Cluster and call on others to join us in developing true programs of study and pathways for career success for learners.” – Karin Athanas, Executive Director, AAFCS.

By not including a diverse range of occupations, the framework risks excluding valuable career pathways and limiting opportunities for a comprehensive workforce development strategy. The Framework also does not consider the structural requirements of states in developing and managing these programs and reporting learner enrollment data to the federal government nor the needs of learners as they pursue their career aspirations.

While it is important to periodically update career clusters overtime, the clusters must be reflective of CTE in schools across the United States and meet the needs of learners and adults, educators, industries, and communities. While many stakeholders participated in surveys and expert groups organized by Advance CTE, it is clear that feedback from these stakeholders was not fully considered in developing the new Framework. In our view the new Framework

- will not support learners and adults to identify and pursue careers,
- will not assist educators in developing CTE programs,
- will not support employee growth in all industries – many of which are experiencing worker shortages, and
- will not lead to growth and increased employment in communities.

There is a need to develop a comprehensive set of clusters that fully reflects the interdisciplinary nature of CTE. That assists states and educators in developing CTE programs and reporting on

learner participation in a cost-effective and efficient manner. And that ensures that all industries and communities can benefit from these programs. However, the Framework published by Advance CTE does not meet these needs.

The AAFCS calls on all stakeholders - learners and adults, educators, industries, and communities - to join us to develop a series of clusters that reflects CTE in the United States, is inclusive of all careers and industries, and adequately addresses the needs of all stakeholders. And we remain ready to support learners and adults, educators, industries, and communities as they pursue CTE programs.

In October, the Alliance for FCS published "Family and Consumer Sciences: Overview of a 100-year-old industry sector," which highlights the critical role FCS plays in preparing learners for careers in Family and Consumer Sciences. It is published on the Alliance website at www.aafcs.org/allianceforfcs/home, evidence of AAFCS' outreach efforts can be found at www.aafcs.org/aafcs-advocacy/aafcs-public-policy/fcs-career-cluster, and examples of our research into the FCS industry can be found at www.aafcs.org/resources/research/industry-statistics.

AAFCS will continue to support states offering Family and Consumer Sciences courses by providing resources such as instructional guides, guidance documents, white papers, continuing education, pre-professional and professional assessments and certifications, maintaining the Family and Consumer Sciences Body of Knowledge, serving as the accreditation body for academic programs in higher education, and partnering with industry to develop school to career pathways. For more information, contact Karin Athanas at kathanas@aafcs.org.

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