Career & Technical Education Expert Review Teams

2025-2026 School Year Deployment Plan

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

July 2025

Maryland
GWDB CTE COMMITTEE

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The Governor's Workforce Development Board is grateful to the CTE Expert Review Team members that participated in the visits over the 2024-2025 School Year, as well as central office and school leadership, staff, and students that contributed valuable insights regarding CTE programs in their Local Education Agency (LEA).

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Executive Summary

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") established the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to develop an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. To inform and monitor this work, *Blueprint* requires that the CTE Committee establish and administer Expert Review Teams (ERT) to visit schools offering CTE pathways. These visits observe and track the progress of local education agencies (LEAs) in implementing CTE programs that align with the *Blueprint*'s vision, Maryland's CTE Framework as established by the CTE Committee, and associated policies. In addition to reviewing progress, the visits are intended to provide support and identify technical assistance needs as LEAs build their CTE systems.

The CTE ERT Deployment Plan for the 2025-2026 School Year (SY) outlines the process and protocol for the second year of Phase 1 of the eight-year CTE ERT Deployment Plan. This plan does not report findings. Instead, CTE Committee staff will write an annual report to include CTE ERT Program findings every December, starting in 2025.

The CTE Committee developed a three-phased approach to deploying the CTE ERT Program through 2023-2031, with phases transitioning from learning and information-gathering to implementation oversight and accountability. The primary goal of Phase 1 (FY2024 - FY2026) is to visit all 24 LEAs to observe success and challenges and to develop accurate baseline information against which to track LEA progress in implementing the Maryland CTE Framework, including progress toward the Blueprint 45% goal. The CTE Committee has issued two policies to define minimum standards and quality criteria for both the "high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship" and other "industry recognized credentials" (IRCs) that will be counted toward the Blueprint's 45% goal.[1]

Summary of CTE Expert Review Team District Visit Structure in SY 2025-2026

Pre-Visit Data Analysis and Dialogue
- LEA completes and submits brief with quantitative and qualitative data, ERT members review in advance of orientation and training session   - Virtual orientation and training session for ERT visit members with LEA leadership, including: - Overview of CTE in the LEA   - Review and discussion of LEA data on CTE and progress toward 45% goal   - CTE enrollment practices, observed challenges, and any other information the LEA Lead staff deems necessary

Full-Day District Visit
Where: Up to 2 schools per day, depending on the LEA CTE structure. Visits typically include both a CTE Center and comprehensive high school with CTE programming. **What:** Guided school tour, CTE classroom visits, and focus groups at each school with: Students

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[1] Career and Technical Education. (2024). "Apprenticeships and Industry-Recognized Credentials for High School Students Under the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*". *Governor's Workforce Development Board*. https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/policy/gwdb2024blueprintgoalpolicyoverview.pdf

- CTE teachers
- LEA administrators and CTE lead designee
- Career coaches/counselors, and possibly school counselors or work-based learning coordinators as relevant in each LEA

Post-Visit Debrief, Assessment, and Reporting
- CTE ERT members submit their notes and a short survey on initial feedback - Virtual debrief held with ERT members 1 week after visit to discuss observations - CTE ERT members help process feedback from LEA administrators on draft observations (option to LEA for asynchronous or synchronous feedback) - CTE ERT members review final post-visit report prior submission to the CTE Committee, AIB, and LEA leadership

Summary of Key Updates to CTE ERT Program for the 2025-2026 School Year

Phase 1 Year 1 (2024-2025 SY)	Phase 1 Year 2 (2025-2026 SY)
5-minute Classroom observations	Guided school tours + more classroom observation
No minimum time for focus groups	At least 45 minutes for every focus group
Pre-Visit Orientation was 90 minutes	Pre-Visit Orientation is 120 minutes with in-depth data-informed discussion with LEA administrators
N/A	Review data on statewide 45% goal progress, CTE completers, CTE enrollment, student and teacher demographics, etc. during the Pre-Visit Orientation
N/A	Post-Visit Debrief, Q&A with LEA administrators
Strengths and Challenges Analysis	Strengths, Challenges, and External Factors Analysis
Day - of focus groups with: 1. LEA Administrators 2. Teachers 3. School-based staff (Administrators, School Counselors, Schedulers, Career Counselors, etc.) 4. Students	Day-of focus groups with: 1. Teachers 2. School-based staff (Administrators, School, Counselors, Schedulers, Career Counselors, etc.) 3. Students

The CTE ERT Program is currently on track to reach its targeted goal of visiting all 24 LEAs by the end of Phase 1 in May 2026. In Phase 2 the CTE ERT Program will transition from discovery to more in-depth analysis, progress assessment, and assistance, with additional details to be planned by the Committee in Spring 2026. Phase 3 will focus on continuous evaluation of and support in making progress toward *Blueprint* goals and annual targets.

The following Plan outlines Deployment Plan goals, phases, protocols, and updates made for SY2025-2026 based on learnings and observations from visits during SY2024-2025.

Purpose of the CTE ERT

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") requires the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) CTE Committee to "establish, administer and supervise" a CTE Expert Review Team (ERT) program for schools in Maryland. The CTE ERT program is required to visit every school with CTE programming in the state by July 1, 2031, with at least 10 percent of CTE schools visited each year. The *Blueprint* directs the CTE Committee to prioritize schools where students are not making adequate progress towards the completion of a CTE pathway. The ERT model is based on practices of systems with strong student performance across academic and career pathways where experts regularly visit schools to deeply understand their programs, their challenges, and their successes. The CTE ERT process is separate from the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) ERT program.

The goal of the *Blueprint*'s CTE ERT program is to determine whether schools are implementing CTE programs aligned to the *Blueprint* vision, as detailed in the CTE Committee's CTE Framework, and monitor progress toward reaching the statewide goal that by the 2030-2031 school year and each year thereafter, 45% of public high school graduates will have completed the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship or another industry-recognized credential by the time of graduation.[2] In addition to monitoring progress, the CTE ERT program is also expected to:[3]

- Identify issues that schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are facing as they expand and strengthen CTE programming and ensure equity of access for all;
- Identify promising practices in schools and LEAs to highlight and share across the state;
- Monitor ongoing progress in implementing high-quality CTE pathways and reaching the *Blueprint's* 45% goal;
- Develop recommendations to address challenges faced by schools, LEAs, and the State in implementing the *Blueprint*'s CTE goals;
- Submit reports to the LEA and the CTE Committee after each visit summarizing progress and making recommendations to address identified issues; and
- Create annual reports for the CTE Committee, which will be submitted to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), to provide information on the status of CTE *Blueprint* implementation and identify policy and technical assistance needs.

The CTE ERT program is a key component of the CTE Committee's long-term role in *Blueprint* implementation and governance of the CTE system as it will allow GWDB CTE Committee staff and members to deeply understand programming across the state, gather continuous feedback on state strategies and policies, gauge progress, exchange information with district leaders, and build best practices and innovation across the state.

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[2] GWDB CTE Committee. (May 2024). *Maryland's CTE Framework*. https://tinyurl.com/35j44vhe
[3] The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, https://aib.maryland.gov/Pages/blueprint-law.aspx, and the AIB's Comprehensive Implementation Plan, updated August 2023, https://bit.ly/3U0YBf9

CTE ERT Plan Overview

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee approved two key organizing principles for the overall CTE Expert Review Team (ERT) plan and will continue with these organizing principles:

- An LEA (rather than school) focus to guide the work, as CTE strategies and programming is organized at an LEA level across the state;
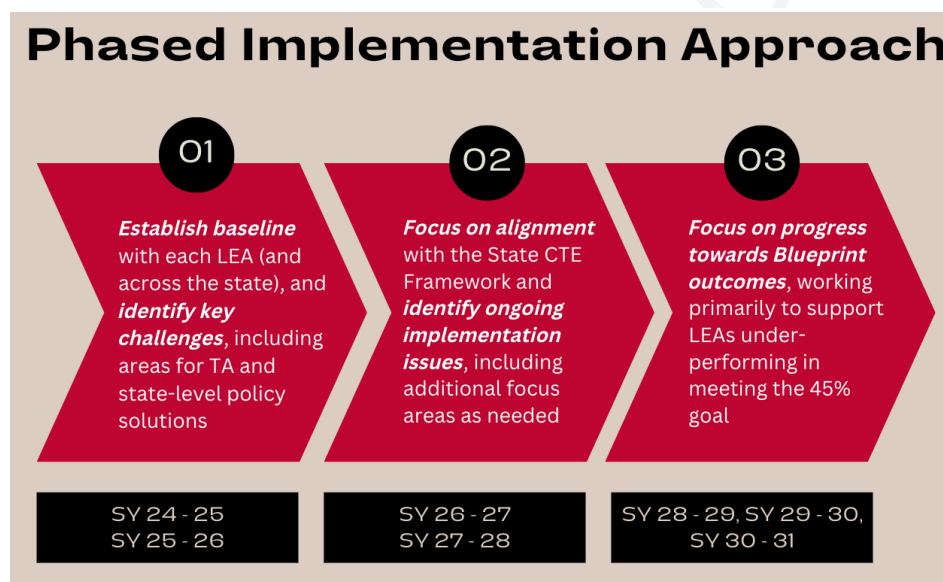- A phased approach to completing and organizing visits over time.

The rationale for an **LEA focus** was that CTE—including strategies, programming priorities, budgeting, transportation, and staffing—is typically organized at the LEA level, not by individual schools. This focus has allowed the CTE Committee to understand the LEA strategy as well as individual school approaches to consider how schools across an LEA are serving students district-wide. It also allowed the CTE Committee staff to report not only progress by LEA and schools, but also to use this to inform the CTE Committee's view of CTE at the state level. This LEA focus will continue to guide the selection of schools to visit in Phase 1 by identifying which schools would be representative samples in each LEA for each visit and sequencing visits on an LEA-based cycle, to the extent possible. Additionally, an LEA focus allows the CTE Committee to conduct multiple visits to each LEA to see their implementation progress over time and impact how CTE is led from the LEA level, whereas visiting all CTE schools in the state would take the full seven years, leaving no time to revisit schools or work with LEA leadership.

Figure 3: This map indicates how many schools with CTE offerings are in each LEA
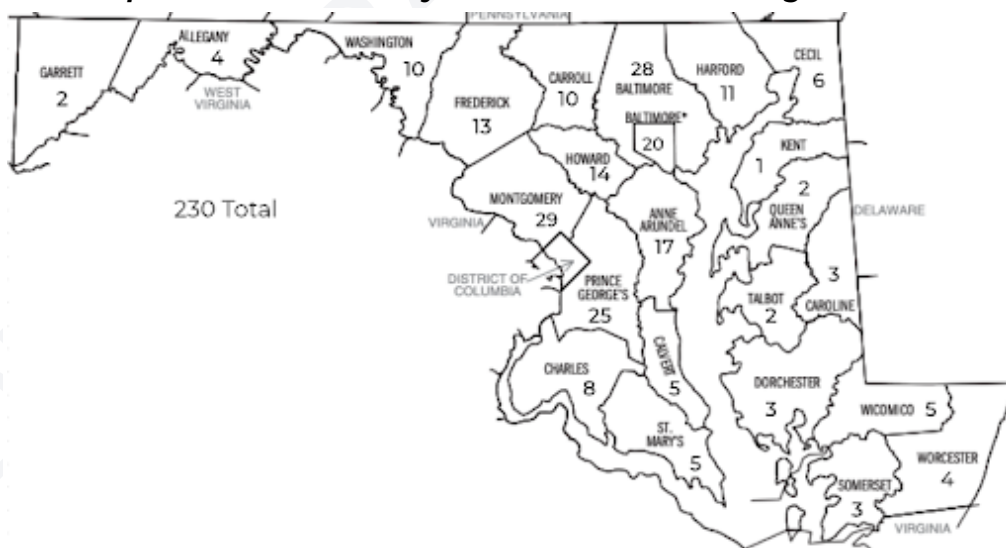
The CTE Committee also proposed a **phased approach** to organizing visits. These phases would reflect the ongoing phases of implementation of a new CTE system in the state. The initial proposal is to use the following three phases to guide the CTE ERT work over the six remaining years of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future's* ("the *Blueprint*") implementation:

- **Phase 1 (2024-2025 SY and 2025-2026 SY):**
  a. Establish a statewide baseline of strengths, challenges, other observations, and each LEA's progress towards *Blueprint* goals, especially the 45% goal
  b. Identify key challenges and areas for technical assistance and state-level policy solutions as well as strengths across the system to build on
  c. Plan Phase 2's CTE ERT Program
  d. Continue refining the CTE ERT visit model and tools
- **Phase 2 (2026-2028 SYs):**
  a. Focus on alignment with the statewide CTE Framework
  b. Identify ongoing implementation issues
  c. Begin targeted assistance towards common challenges identified in Phase 1
  d. Plan and implement a statewide data collection program based on the 2024 IRC Policy and new Perkins regulations
- **Phase 3 (2028-2031 SYs):** Focus on progress toward *Blueprint* outcomes, working primarily to support LEAs struggling to make forward progress toward the statewide 45% goal.

Phased Implementation Approach

01	02	03
Establish baseline with each LEA (and across the state), and **identify key challenges**, including areas for TA and state-level policy solutions	**Focus on alignment** with the State CTE Framework and **identify ongoing implementation issues**, including additional focus areas as needed	**Focus on progress towards Blueprint outcomes**, working primarily to support LEAs under-performing in meeting the 45% goal
SY 24 - 25 SY 25 - 26	SY 26 - 27 SY 27 - 28	SY 28 - 29, SY 29 - 30, SY 30 - 31

The goal of Phase 1 was to visit all 24 LEAs in Maryland to construct a statewide baseline of understanding and discover the range of challenges, strengths, and status of CTE implementation and administration. Between the pilot visits and the 2024-2025 SY, the CTE ERT Program has visited and conducted research at 13 LEAs and 23 schools, which is 10% of the 230 schools in Maryland that have CTE offerings. The CTE ERT Program has scheduled visits to the 11 remaining LEAs in the 2025-2026 SY. Considering the targeted outcome of Phase 1 was to visit all 24 LEAs, the CTE ERT Program is on the right trajectory to reach its targeted outcome by the end of Phase 1.

The pacing of Phases 2 and 3 will be adjusted to reflect the CTE Committee's budget and staffing levels and the program timeline. If the CTE Committee is to meet the goal of visiting all 230 schools with CTE programming in the state by 2031, CTE ERT would need to visit 36

schools each year after 2025-2026 SY. No matter the number of schools to be visited, the CTE ERT tools and approach will need to be adapted in each phase to reflect the progression of the work and emerging priorities as the CTE ERT Program is mandated to visit all 230 schools with CTE offerings.

In addition to following these organizing principles for the CTE ERT Program, the CTE Committee staff will continue to focus the site visits on broad discussion of key issues and challenges, with as much background information shared and discussed in advance to optimize the in-person time. This will make the visits valuable to the school and LEA participants. CTE ERT visits are meant to be a learning process for the LEAs and the schools participating, providing an opportunity for them to reflect, as well as a time to inform the CTE Committee and elevate recurring themes. CTE Committee staff will plan the visits closely with the LEAs and the schools, and strive to make the visiting process as helpful as possible for the LEA and not a compliance activity. The CTE Committee staff will also make every effort possible to coordinate planning with MSDE's ERT program so as to avoid a duplication in visits.

To transition the CTE ERT work from Phase 1 into Phase 2, it is imperative that the CTE Committee staff use their preliminary findings from the initial CTE ERT visits to determine the next set of goals and expectations. Although this Deployment Plan outlines the phases of the CTE ERT, the CTE Committee will keep their commitment to create a balance between flexibility for local needs and consistency in conducting research. In the planning process for Phase 2, the CTE Committee will closely collaborate with partners such as the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, the Accountability and Implementation Board, the Maryland State Department of Education, LEAs, and any other entity that works closely in moving the *Blueprint* forward. The CTE Committee will begin planning Phase 2 in spring 2026. The planning for Phase 2 will require the CTE Committee to come up with a decision-making process to identify ongoing implementation issues based on the preliminary findings from Phase 1 and what technical assistance will look like to address those challenges. The CTE Committee will need to collaborate with key stakeholders to decide what schools to visit, why visit those schools, and what target information the CTE ERT will look for to ultimately brainstorm what Phase 2 visits will entail. Phase 2 includes a more evaluative lens to CTE ERT visits, because according to the *Blueprint*, the AIB may withhold a portion of the increase in the State share of major education aid. According to the *Blueprint*, the criteria for releasing LEA funds shall be based on LEA implementation plan approval by the AIB, in addition to recommendations made by MSDE, the CTE Committee, and/or sufficient evidence of progress in implementing the *Blueprint* in the AIB's judgment.[4] The CTE Committee expects there to be continued school tours, focus groups, *etc.*, but for these protocols to dive more deeply into the nature and impact of the challenges the LEAs face in achieving *Blueprint* goals and outcomes, especially the 45% goal.

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[4] AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYQGhld5Qwk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing.

CTE ERT Deployment Plan 2025-2026 SY

The sections below explain how the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee plans to organize activities for 2025-2026 School Year (SY) CTE Expert Review Team (ERT) visits.

Timeline

As explained above, the CTE Committee plans to visit all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in Phase 1 of the CTE ERT Program. During the 2024-2025 SY, the CTE Committee deployed ERT to 11 of the 24 LEAs. During the pilot period, the CTE ERT Program visited two LEAs. This means the remaining 11 LEAs will be visited in the 2025-2026 SY. The proposed timeline means conducting five visits in the fall semester and six visits in the spring semester of the 2025-2026 SY, targeting a mix of small and large LEAs. Each visit will span one day and will encompass at least two schools (or one comprehensive high school and one CTE center), when practical. Given the setup of CTE programs and the schools that house them, there could be occasions where only one school in an LEA will be visited during this phase. The CTE ERT Program will visit two schools per LEA in the 2025-2026 SY, but it may not be possible in all instances if the LEA only has one central CTE center for all CTE offerings or if the schools are geographically distant from each other. In each

CTE ERT PHASE TIMELINE

Spring 2023
PILOT
LEAs Visited: 2
Schools Visited: 4

Fall 2024
PHASE 1
LEAs Visited: 6
Schools Visited: 10

Spring 2025
PHASE 1
LEAs Visited: 5
Schools Visited: 8

Fall 2025
PHASE 1
Planned LEAs: 5
Planned Schools: 9

Spring 2026
PHASE 1
Planned LEAs: 6
Planned Schools: 12

LEA, the CTE Committee staff and LEA will choose a representative set of schools to visit, taking into account multiple factors including school type (CTE center vs. comprehensive high school), geography, size, and range of programming. The CTE ERT Program will also consider schools/programs with lower enrollment or completion rates. See the graphic below for a draft timeline for visits in the 2025-2026 SY. If time and resources allow, CTE ERT Program will revisit the pilot LEAs with a modified procedure, which would mean visiting 13 LEAs in the 2025-2026 SY. The CTE Committee will also spend time in spring 2026 planning for Phase 2 visits. The timeline takes LEA calendar constraints into account; CTE Committee staff will work with LEAs to organize the agenda to ensure the least disruption as possible to the school day.
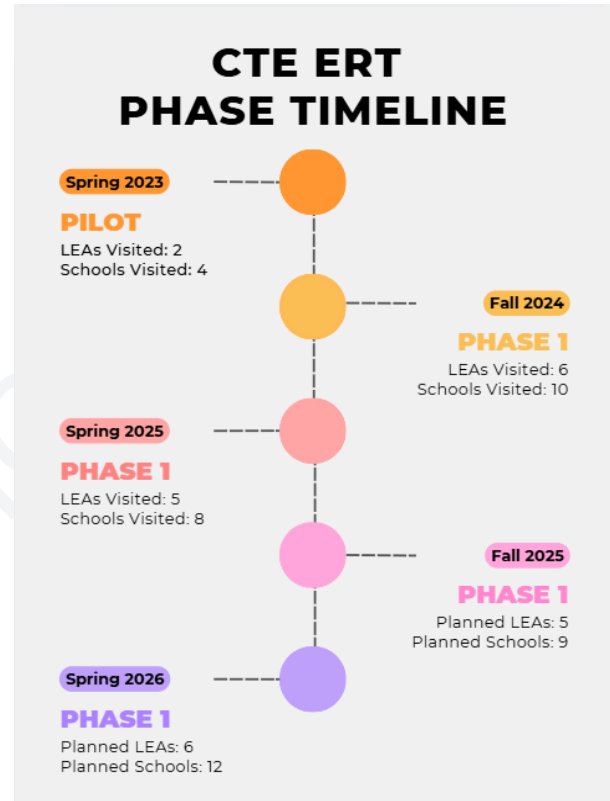
CTE ERT VISIT TIMELINE
2025-2026 SY

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Visit 1 Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 5	Visit 6 Visit 7	Visit 8 Visit 9	Visit 10	Visit 11

Based on the above timeline, the CTE ERT Program will visit 11 LEAs and attempt to visit at least two schools with CTE offerings; however, some LEAs have one school with CTE offerings or have schools with CTE offerings that are geographically distant from one another, resulting in the CTE ERT visiting one school. The CTE Committee staff will coordinate with LEAs to determine where the CTE ERT Program will visit. In the 2025-2026 SY, the CTE ERT Program will visit the following LEAs:

Kent County Public Schools	October 8, 2025
Howard County Public Schools	October 22, 2025
Baltimore City Public Schools	November 5, 2025
Frederick County Public Schools	December 11, 2025
St. Mary's County Public Schools	January 28, 2026
Harford County Public School	February 11, 2026
Calvert County Public Schools	February 25, 2026
Prince George's County Public Schools	March 12, 2026
Allegany County Public Schools	March 26, 2026
Carroll County Public Schools	April 22, 2026
Garrett County Public Schools	May 6, 2026

These 11 CTE ERT visits will continue Phase 1's purposes of establishing a baseline of understanding for the state of CTE in Maryland and determining what common challenges will need technical assistance moving forward. Starting in FY26, the CTE Committee can leverage the information gathered through the CTE ERT program to recommend the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) exercise its authority to withhold funding if an LEA is not making a good faith effort to reach the 45% goal and is not demonstrating sufficient progress over time. Before recommending the AIB withhold funds, the CTE Committee will first provide the LEA with support around targeted technical assistance to address their identified challenges, with adequate time to implement changes and demonstrate progress. Under the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*"), the AIB may withhold a portion of the increase in the State share of major education aid. According to the *Blueprint*, the criteria for releasing LEA funds shall be based on LEA implementation plan approval by the AIB, in addition to recommendations made by MSDE, the CTE Committee, and/or sufficient evidence of progress in implementing the *Blueprint* in the AIB's judgment.[5] It is highly unlikely the CTE Committee will make a funding recommendation until the CTE ERT are able to visit LEAs at least twice to assess implementation progress, recognizing that laying the groundwork for achieving these ambitious goals will take several years.

[5] AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYQGhld5Qwk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing.

School Selection

As the CTE ERT Program continues Phase 1 of the work, the CTE Committee will continue to visit two schools in each LEA chosen to be representative schools in the LEA. In LEAs with both CTE centers and CTE offered in comprehensive high schools, the CTE ERT Program will attempt to visit one of each. In LEAs where CTE is offered only in comprehensive high schools, CTE ERT will visit two high schools. In addition to structure, the CTE Committee will also consider geography, academic performance, and the level of CTE enrollment and completion as criteria for selecting representative schools.

The statute also requires that the CTE ERT prioritize visits to schools "in which sufficient numbers of students or groups of demographically distinct students are not making adequate progress towards the completion of the CTE pathway."[6] The goal of observing the state of CTE in Maryland during Phase 1 will help the CTE Committee effectively understand what "adequate progress" means set against the *Blueprint's* 45% goal and the specific milestones that the CTE Committee and AIB will establish with each LEA, to progress toward the statewide 45% goal. Given the goal that 45% of high school graduates complete the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship or another industry-recognized credential by the time of graduation in the 2030-2031 SY, the CTE Committee will establish milestones and develop a methodology to identify schools based on this definition during the remainder of Phase 1 to implement in Phase 2.

The key considerations for the CTE Committee in establishing a definition of "adequate progress" and aligned metrics during FY2026 include:

- How to define a statewide bar for progress or consider progress within each LEA?
- How is completion defined now that the CTE Committee's CTE Framework, the industry-recognized credential, and high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship policy are approved?
- In setting a bar for sufficient progress, how will students who switch CTE programs or change to a different post-CCR path be accounted for?
- Per the definition, is data readily available to provide a school-level baseline of sufficient progress?

This task will necessitate the CTE ERT Program to expand its data collection from what was collected during the pilot phase and during the first year of Phase 1. During CTE ERT visits thus far, the CTE Committee staff collected data on CTE enrollment and CTE concentrators as well as the percentage of students who have completed CTE programs; earned an industry-recognized credential (IRC), per the MSDE definition prior to CTE Committee's defining policy in 2024; completed a youth apprenticeship or participated in Registered Apprenticeship. This gave the CTE ERT a high-level understanding of participation in current CTE programming in the LEA, but not a way to gauge the school-level completion of CTE pathways.

The CTE Committee staff found inconsistencies in the LEAs' method for gathering data as each LEA collected data differently and with different measurements. Further complicating

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[6] Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, https://bit.ly/3W0JoeU

data collection, the federal and state regulations for data collection through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, the federal law that provides funding for CTE programs in the United States, has changed their protocol for data gathering and will not be finalized until the 2026-2027 SY.[7] Therefore, the visit materials are fluid and will be updated to collect additional LEA- and school-level data that will help the CTE Committee understand each LEA's current CTE programs and progress towards the 45% goal. As the CTE ERT Program finalizes Phase 1 in the 2025-2026 SY, the quantitative data the CTE Committee staff gathers from individual LEAs on IRC/RA attainment rates, CTE completion rates, CTE enrollment, and CTE concentrators needs to be understood as inconsistently gathered and using different benchmarks and measures compared to data from the 2026-2027 SY. In other words, the data the CTE ERT Program collects year-to-year will not accurately reflect trends or progress towards *Blueprint* goals until at least October 2027.

CTE ERT Members

The *Blueprint* legislation envisions the CTE ERT to have a mix of educator and workforce perspectives, requiring teams to include:[8]

- Highly regarded CTE teachers who are represented by teachers' organizations that, for the purposes of collective bargaining, represent a majority of teachers in the State or in a local school system;
- School leaders;
- Employers;
- Trade unions; and
- Apprenticeship and internship sponsors.

In addition to these perspectives, the team will need to include core CTE Committee staff and LEA leaders. Given the layers of partnership that the *Blueprint* envisions, it seemed prudent to develop a team that also includes representatives from postsecondary, Local Workforce Development Boards, MSDE, DWDAL, the AIB, and other agencies responsible for implementing the *Blueprint* when possible. Organizing the right set of team members can be a challenge for several reasons. Given the limited budget for this work, the CTE Committee is unlikely to be able to pay stipends for the participation of CTE instructors and will likely need to limit the number of visits any particular teacher or school leader participates in for this reason, especially since participation will be voluntary and involves a lot of time, including the orientation, full-day visit, and debrief. Many employers cannot spare a full day of time for an LEA visit, or for multiple visits. Because apprenticeship is the preferred pathway, the CTE Committee will prioritize including employers who are apprenticeship sponsors over internship sponsors on CTE ERT.

Given these limitations, the CTE Committee core team members include:

- 1-3 CTE Committee staff;

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[7] MSDE. (Spring 2024). "Career and Technical Education: State Determined Performance Levels." *Office of College and Career Pathways*. https://tinyurl.com/2vbx3tym
[8] Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §5-412, https://bit.ly/3XGrILZ (see Appendix I)

- 1 CTE teacher represented by a teachers' organization that, for the purposes of collective bargaining, represents a majority of teachers in the State or in a local school system, preferably a representative from a neighboring LEA;
- 1 school/LEA leader (i.e., Principal, Assistant Principal, LEA Lead CTE Designee, Blueprint Implementation Coordinator), preferably a representative from a neighboring LEA; and
- 1 employer, trade union representative, and/or apprenticeship sponsor.

Optional team members will include a representative from:

- CTE Committee member or their designee
- Local Workforce Development Board staff or board member
- Local community college
- Other agencies responsible for implementing the *Blueprint*, inclusive of MSDE and AIB staff

The CTE ERT will consist of 10-14 individuals for each LEA visit. This group will then be split into two teams while on the visit. The CTE Committee staff learned that 5-7 individuals is a reasonable number to participate in a school tour and conduct focus groups without being overwhelming for the students, teachers, and staff. It is likely that some individuals will fulfill more than one category of team representation. For example, a CTE Committee member who joins a visit can also be an employer and Registered Apprenticeship sponsor. It is also likely that some CTE teachers, school leaders, and LEA Lead CTE Designers may be able to join multiple visits, and some may only be able to join one. These and other factors suggest that the makeup of teams will vary by visit. The goal is that over multiple visits, CTE ERT are able to bring in a full range of perspectives and expertise to contribute to our overall understanding of the state of CTE across Maryland. The CTE Committee also sees Phase 1 as a period for determining the most efficient and effective way to organize teams to continue to refine:

- The number of members that should consistently join visits
- The appropriate number of members to spend the day in a school
- Whether to over-enroll the team to accommodate potential attrition

Required responsibilities of CTE ERT members will include:

- Participating in a 120-minute virtual orientation and training session. In this orientation, district leadership including the LEA Lead CTE Designee will:
  a. Provide a detailed explanation for what CTE looks like at their LEA, including their self-reported data on progress towards the 45% goal and their LEA-specific milestones to achieve that goal, enrollment practices, over- and undersubscribed programs, observed challenges, collaborations with the community, and other information the LEA Lead CTE Designee deems necessary for the CTE ERT to know;

   b. Participate in conversations with the CTE ERT based on the questions in the CTE ERT Toolkit;[9] and

   c. Answer any other follow-up or lingering questions from the CTE ERT

- Reviewing background documents about the LEA and the schools in advance of the meeting
- Participating in a full-day visit
- Providing answers to a short, after-visit survey
- Participating in a virtual CTE ERT debrief of the visit and submitting written feedback on the visit
- Optional: Participating in a virtual debrief, arranged by CTE Committee staff, with LEA Lead CTE Designee to review observations and data prior to finalization of the post-visit report:
    - a. Asynchronous option - CTE Committee staff send a drafted report to the LEA Lead CTE Designee, who then sends written feedback to staff; or
    - b. Synchronous option - CTE Committee staff virtually meet with LEA Lead CTE Designee to review observations and data
- Reviewing post-visit reports for edit prior to finalization and submission to the CTE Committee, AIB, and LEA leadership

The orientation provides a space for the LEA Lead CTE Designees to give insights to the CTE ERT on what may be some challenges they are facing to help focus the visit. These orientations give the CTE ERT information about the LEA as a whole, then go into more specifics about the school(s) the CTE ERT visits. In the orientation, the CTE ERT asks the questions in the CTE ERT Toolkit if they are not covered in the LEA Lead CTE Designees' presentation.[10] In addition, a week after the visit, the CTE ERT gathers virtually to debrief the team on their findings. Each member will be expected to contribute to the conversation and debrief from their own perspectives (employer, teacher, *etc*.). The virtual team debrief operates like a peer review, where experts from their field collaborate with one another to report observations as accurately as possible.

The CTE ERT Program will recruit members for the visits through several avenues. CTE Committee staff will work with LEA Lead CTE Designees to nominate CTE teachers and school leaders from their district to participate in visits to neighboring districts. For employers, and Registered Apprenticeship sponsors, the CTE Committee will utilize its network of Governor's Workforce Development Board members and connections with the Local Workforce Development Boards. For the optional team members, the CTE Committee will partner with the respective listed agencies to plan on staff participation accordingly. One new tactic to recruit participation in the CTE ERT is to host group information sessions over summer 2025 to increase interest from partners. These information sessions are open to all partners and offer opportunities to collaborate as well.

Visit Structure

The CTE ERT Program plans for the 2025-2026 SY visits to be structured in much the same way as the 2024-2025 SY visits. The major elements of these visits include:

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[9] See Appendix C to review sample tools developed.
[10] See Appendix C to review sample tools developed.

- A full-day visit with one school in the morning and one in the afternoon
- Focus group sessions (45-60 min each) with:
    - LEA administrators and CTE Lead Designee
    - CTE teachers
    - School-based staff, including career coaches/advisors/counselors, and possibly school counselors or work-based learning coordinators if applicable/appropriate, depending on the LEA's structure
    - Students
- A planned walking tour of each school with observational visits to CTE classrooms

The CTE ERT Program plans to continue making adjustments to the agendas used for the visits, including extending the focus group sessions to allow for a fuller conversation and modifying the times allotted for school tours to maximize engagement among CTE ERT members, students, and teachers. It is crucial for the CTE ERT Program to maintain a flexible visit structure to adapt to the needs and conditions of each LEA and locality so that the CTE ERT may conduct accurate and appropriate research. For the visits so far, CTE ERT were split into two groups to cover the range of conversations, classroom visits, and school tours planned at each school. The CTE Committee considered a number of scheduling questions like whether the two groups should specialize (all focus groups vs. all class visits) or if each group should do a mix of activities. The CTE Committee staff will continue to experiment and adapt as CTE ERT visits continue into the 2025-2026 SY.

The school visits and focus groups provide a limited understanding for the state of CTE because school officials choose what the CTE ERT may see. For example, a school may choose only extremely successful students for focus groups, revealing only one very specific set of perspectives towards common challenges and not a comprehensive perspective. Ideally, the CTE ERT Program would be able to have more comprehensive research methods, for example, surveying students and teachers paired with a systemic observation, but those would require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval since they involve human subjects and will have their results published in public spaces. Currently, the CTE ERT Program is seeking feedback from stakeholders and CTE experts to help the State achieve *Blueprint* goals, identify common challenges, and observe best practices.

In addition to the visit, the CTE Committee staff will organize a virtual orientation and a virtual debrief session for each LEA visit. One new addition to the second year of Phase 1 is the Optional Post-Visit Debrief for the LEA Lead CTE Designee, where the LEA Lead CTE Designee reviews findings and data, then provides feedback to CTE Committee staff. The CTE ERT Program will plan to continue this approach in order to get as many CTE ERT members as possible to participate.

Visit Planning and Tools

For each visit, there is extensive planning involved to create an agenda and background materials for CTE ERT members. In addition, a set of research tools and protocols have been developed to use on the visits to guide the CTE ERT work and conversations.

Once an LEA is chosen for a visit, the CTE Committee staff will plan the visits closely with the LEA Lead CTE Designee, relying on them for recommendations of schools to visit with a goal of understanding the LEA-wide system. In addition, the staff will look to have an initial conversation with the LEA Lead CTE Designee/lead staff to understand their sense of the LEA's strengths, challenges, current implementation plans, and projections for progress towards *Blueprint* goals. A conversation with the LEA Lead CTE Designee will help contextualize and focus the visit so the CTE ERT can look for specific areas to observe. Once the schools are selected, CTE Committee staff will reach out to the schools to explain the goals of the visit and ask how best to make the visit useful for the school while minimizing disruptions. For example, LEA Lead CTE Designee will be asked if there are particular issues they want to get feedback on so that their needs can be added to the team's questions/conversations.[11]

The CTE Committee staff have determined the set of LEAs to be visited in 2025-2026 SY, therefore over the summer of 2025, the CTE Committee will:

Compile Background Materials

- Collect and organize information:
    - The structure of CTE in the LEA
    - The range of programs offered by schools across the LEA
    - Enrollment, performance, and completion data and trends to make predictions for IRC/RA attainment rates in three years, five years, and for the 2030-2031 SY
    - Information about higher education institutions, leading employers and industries, and employment rates in the LEA

Organize CTE ERT Visits & Orientations

- Recruit and organize participants for each visit
- Organize orientation for the team, with each LEA director prepared to provide an overview of the system, key strengths, and key challenges and a review of the visit schedule and protocols
- Develop an agenda with background information about who the team is interviewing and the programs to visit

Debrief & Create Post Visit Reports

- Survey CTE ERT members for initial reactions, thoughts, and questions at the end of every visit
- Schedule a debrief with CTE ERT members and an individual debrief with the LEA Lead CTE Designee/Admin to review the visit and identify key strengths and opportunities at the school, county, and state level

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[11] MSDE has a separate Expert Review Team program, charged with visiting all schools K-12. While the MSDE ERT purpose and structure are different and separate from the CTE ERT, staff from both agencies are in communication to avoid overlap in visit schedules, and an MSDE staff representative is an optional team member to join CTE ERT visits.

- Develop a report on each visit (reviewed by the team) and time to discuss the visit and the report with schools and LEA leadership

CTE Committee staff have developed a set of templates, tools, and protocols to help structure and organize the visit work.[12] To inform visit reports and school/LEA recommendations, the following data will be collected before the visits:

- Enrollment and completion rates in CTE, IRC attainment, and high school level Registered Apprenticeship programs at the district and school level
- Enrollment (including over and under enrollment) in programs at school and LEA levels[13]
- New programs planned, including those incorporating the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship
- Post-high school paths of current students, to the degree possible
- IRCs offered by each CTE program

It is important to note the nuances in data collection throughout the State: each individual LEA gathers and measures data differently. Some schools, especially CTE Centers, gather and measure data differently than the other schools within their LEA. For this reason, the data the LEA provides to the CTE Committee needs to be understood in the context it has been collected and quantified. More importantly, this data will not accurately reflect the annual progress LEAs make towards the *Blueprint's* 45% goal until MSDE validates and disseminates that data in the 2026-2027 SY, at the earliest.[14]

Reporting and Follow Up

After debriefing each visit, CTE Committee staff will develop an LEA report to compile the CTE ERT's observations. Phase 1 visits are meant to be an opportunity for the CTE Committee to understand what CTE looks like in all 24 LEAs and observe common challenges LEAs face. With these purposes in mind, these reports during Phase 1 focus on:

- System overview (how the system is structured)
- The LEA's self-reported data on progress towards the *Blueprint's* 45% goal
- Summary of the visit, including relevant information from each school visited
- A SCE Analysis to identify and categorize Strengths, Challenges, and External factors, which is a modified version of the SWOT Analysis (a popular method of analysis to differentiate among Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), which also differentiates among internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats

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[12] See the Appendix C to review sample tools developed.
[13] This is inclusive of CTE programs that are "oversubscribed." Oversubscribed generally refers to CTE programs of study where there are more students applying than there are seats/instructors/space available, and therefore some students are put on a waitlist. LEAs have varying approaches for deciding which students are chosen from the waitlist, but typically this includes a portion that are chosen through a lottery. For example, 100 students may apply for the welding program in the upcoming SY, but due to safety and space allocation for the welding work space required, only 20 students can be in the class.
[14] MSDE. (Spring 2024). "Career and Technical Education: State Determined Performance Levels." *Office of College and Career Pathways*. https://tinyurl.com/2vbx3tym

- Looking ahead (ideas about strategies the LEA might consider as it moves ahead to reach *Blueprint* goals)
- Preliminary suggestions for next steps

Draft reports will be reviewed by CTE ERT members, as well as CTE Committee members and staff. The reports will also be shared with LEA and school leaders, and optional debrief sessions to discuss the findings of the reports will be arranged. The CTE Committee staff will provide an optional debrief time for the LEA Lead CTE Designee to review and feedback the Post-Visit Report. LEA Lead CTE Designees have the option to attend either a(n) A) asynchronous feedback session, where the CTE Committee staff sends a drafted report for written feedback or B) synchronous feedback session, where the CTE Committee staff virtually meets with the LEA Lead CTE Designee to discuss findings and review data.

The goal is to produce LEA reports within eight weeks of the visit. Currently, there are too many variables for the CTE Committee staff to develop a specific process or timeline for the post-visit reports. The CTE Committee staff needs to have a flexible process for these post-visit reports to accommodate the staffing and scheduling hurdles the CTE Committee staff has faced and will continue to face in the 2025-2026 SY.

An important nuance to reporting from CTE ERT visits is the efficacy of LEA's self-reported data. Because there are inconsistencies in the LEAs' method for gathering quantitative data on enrollment, IRC/RA attainment, *etc.*, post-visit reports must communicate the contexts within which the self-reported data was collected. Further complicating data collection, the federal and state regulations for data collection through Perkins have changed their protocol and will not be finalized until the 2026-2027 SY.[15] For this reason, post-visit reports will not accurately reflect annual progress towards the *Blueprint's* 45% goal until October 2027, when the CTE ERT Program is in Phase 2.

In addition to each LEA report, the CTE Committee staff will include information on the visits in an annual report that is due December 1, starting in 2025. The CTE ERT Program will compile findings across LEAs and focus on:

- Key progress being made in strengthening LEA programs and meeting outcome goals around completion of CTE programs, the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship and awarding of IRCs that meet the new standards;
- Common challenges LEAs are confronting that call for consideration of state initiatives or policy changes; and,
- Proposed changes, if any, in legislation either in the timeline of CTE system implementation or in the substance of required changes.

The report will be due in December 2025 and will draw on insights and findings from the previous CTE ERT visits. The CTE Committee staff found LEAs across the state use different methods and measurements to gather relevant data. Moreover, federal and state regulations for data collection through Perkins have changed their protocol and will not be finalized until

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[15] MSDE. (Spring 2024). "Career and Technical Education: State Determined Performance Levels." *Office of College and Career Pathways*. https://tinyurl.com/2vbx3tym

the 2026-2027 SY.[16] For this reason, the CTE Committee staff must rely on the research findings from focus groups, observations, interviews, and other components of the CTE ERT visits and communicate the context for LEAs' self-reported data.

Staffing

The CTE Committee is outlining the best overall staffing structure for the CTE ERT Program given the hiring of four new positions over 2025, and the pending replacement of the CTE ERT manager. Between March 2025 and May 2025, the GWDB staff expanded to hire three new staff members: a CTE Research Data Analyst, a CTE Senior Director, and a Program Manager, with a Senior Policy Analyst to be hired in the summer 2025. Although the team has expanded, the departure of the CTE ERT Manager in July 2025 has created a hurdle for the CTE Committee staff. At a minimum, the CTE ERT program work tasks and functions that will need to be staffed include:

- Logistics of planning and overseeing visits
- Liaison to LEAs
- Preparation and dissemination of background materials
- Organization and analysis of data from LEAs and visits
- Preparation of LEA reports and debrief with LEA and schools
- Analysis of data and visit reports across the state to develop state-level recurring themes and challenges, recommendations for ways to address challenges and subsequent required followup resulting from the recommendations, and drafting these elements within the annual report
- Ongoing data collection and monitoring of LEA progress toward *Blueprint* goals
- Analysis of technical assistance needs

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[16] MSDE. (Spring 2024). "Career and Technical Education: State Determined Performance Levels." *Office of College and Career Pathways*. https://tinyurl.com/2vbx3tym

PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Including the two pilot visits, the CTE ERT Program has visited 13 LEAs, and 23 schools. During this time, the CTE ERT Program has undergone some improvements to more effectively improve the team's ability to observe strengths and challenges reaching *Blueprint* goals and to create a baseline for the State's progress towards these goals. These six strategies for improvement are:

1. Replaced classroom visits with school tours
2. Realigned focus groups
3. Revised focus group protocols
4. Increased orientation from 90-minutes to 120-minutes
5. Implemented a Strengths, Challenges, and External factors (SCE) analysis
6. Included an optional Post-Visit Debrief for LEA Lead CTE Designee to review findings

Replaced Classroom Visits with School Tours

One of the biggest adaptations the CTE ERT made was to replace the short classroom observations to some select CTE classrooms with school tours that include a short visit to most CTE classrooms. It became apparent that classroom visits were too short and disruptive to make meaningful observations. The CTE ERT was not able to gather useful information in such a short amount of time while interrupting teaching time, distracting both students and teachers. On the other hand, school tours allowed the CTE ERT to cover a great deal of breadth, visiting many classrooms, making observations about CTE offerings and marketing, and interviewing students and staff while on tour in a more casual setting. These school tours opened a window for participants to provide more authentic reflections and input. Moreover, these school tours allowed for a more effective focus group session because the CTE ERT already developed rapport with teachers, students, counselors, and other focus group members. These school tours, some led by students and others led by staff, allowed the CTE ERT to more effectively observe the context students are in and the relationships among teachers, staff, and students.

Realigned Focus Groups

In order to accommodate the school tour, the CTE Committee staff decided to remove the focus group with LEA CTE lead staff and administrators. Because the CTE ERT meets with LEA CTE lead staff and some administrators during the virtual orientation leading up to the CTE ERT visit, much of the information that came from the LEA CTE lead staff and administrator focus groups already came in the LEA Brief, orientation, and CTE ERT visit introduction. Moreover, the LEA Lead CTE Designee, staff, and administrators come on the CTE ERT school tours to answer questions and converse with the CTE ERT in a more informal setting, while also providing context for the CTE ERT's observations on the school tour. Replacing the LEA CTE lead staff administrator focus groups and classroom observations with a school tour has proven to be a meaningful upgrade as the CTE ERT has more opportunities to make connections and have participants provide authentic input.

Revised Focus Group Protocols

In addition to replacing the LEA CTE staff and administrator focus group with a school tour, the CTE ERT also made important revisions to the focus groups before starting the 2024-2025 SY. Because of the nature of focus groups requiring a high level of formality and questioning, the CTE Committee staff determined that every focus group needs to be at least 45 minutes long to allow participants to provide useful input when answering focus group questions. The CTE ERT would ideally have at least an hour for focus groups to have the appropriate depth for reporting strengths, challenges, and a baseline for progress towards *Blueprint* goals. Focus groups under 45 minutes would not allow participants to provide the depth in their answers for the CTE ERT to make meaningful observations to create a baseline for what challenges the LEAs face and what best practices the team can take to the State. Moreover, the CTE Committee staff revised the focus group questions to further emphasize the team's ability to make effective observations when on visits. For instance, the CTE Committee staff reorganized the questions into "Priority Questions" and "Additional Questions" so facilitators could gather more meaningful information from the CTE ERT visits.[17]

Increased Orientation from 90-Minutes to 120-Minute

The CTE Committee staff also noted how the 90-minute orientation leading up to the CTE ERT visit was not sufficient in communicating the information the team needed. The CTE ERT orientation has a lot of information to cover, both from the CTE ERT Manager, who provides all of the protocols, goals, and tools for the CTE ERT visit, and the LEA Lead CTE Designee who provides all of the local context for the LEA and the school(s) the CTE ERT will visit. An hour and a half was not enough time to cover the relevant information for the CTE ERT, so the CTE Committee staff decided to extend the orientation time to two hours, or 120 minutes. The CTE Committee staff recognized two hours is difficult for the CTE ERT volunteers to fit into their schedules, but the CTE Committee staff recorded the orientations so those who cannot attend the orientation may still access the appropriate information to guide a successful CTE ERT visit.

Extending the Pre-Visit Orientation to 120-minutes also creates ample opportunity for the LEA Lead CTE Designee to help the CTE ERT understand the state of CTE in their LEA more comprehensively. The increased time gives the LEA Lead CTE Designee an opportunity to explain enrollment processes more fully, target challenges the CTE ERT should look for during the visit, unpack and contextualize the various data in the LEA Brief, and ask the LEA Lead CTE Designee questions. This extra 30 minutes for the Pre-Visit Orientation allows the CTE ERT to ask the LEA Lead CTE Designee questions from the CTE Toolkit that were not covered in their presentation.[18]

Implemented a Strength, Challenges, and External Factors (SCE) Analysis

After writing several post-visit reports, the CTE Committee staff decided to revise the approach for reporting the key strengths and challenges the CTE ERT observed. Originally, the CTE ERT planned to report the strengths and challenges, but after a few visits, the CTE Committee staff recognized many of the factors the LEAs faced were external, and therefore, needed its own category. Based on the more popular SWOT analysis, which differentiated

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[17] Appendix C to review sample tools developed.
[18] Appendix C to review sample tools developed.

among internal factors - strengths and weaknesses - and external factors - opportunities and threats - the Strengths, Challenges, and External Factors (SCE) Analysis is meant to provide a clearer, more organized set of observations for the LEA's progress towards *Blueprint* goals. The SCE Analysis provides ample opportunities for the CTE ERT to organize and categorize observations into strengths and challenges, and differentiate them from external factors. These post-visit reports then can be used as a tool by LEA Lead CTE Designees and staff to develop communities of practice with their strengths, target technical assistance with their challenges, and advocate collaborators to address external factors. For instance, one LEA CTE administrator leveraged the post-visit report in their Board of Education meeting to highlight transportation hurdles their students were facing in order to advocate for more buses.

An optional Post-Visit Debrief for LEA Lead CTE Designee and LEA Staff to Review and Confirm the CTE ERT's Findings

Finally, the CTE ERT Program intends to create opportunities to receive feedback from the LEA Lead CTE Designee when writing Post-Visit Reports. The CTE Committee staff gives the LEA Lead CTE Designee two options to consider for giving feedback to Post-Visit Reports:

A. Asynchronous written feedback - the CTE Committee staff give the LEA Lead CTE Designee a draft of the post-visit report for review and written feedback within a designated time to be agreed upon by both; or
B. Synchronous feedback - the CTE Committee staff will present the CTE ERT's observations, findings, and data during a virtual meeting.

This Post-Visit Debrief will be an optional task for the LEA Lead CTE Designee, but is highly recommended. This collaboration will ensure the CTE Committee staff has the most accurate and comprehensive understanding for the state of CTE in that specific LEA. This collaboration will also help the CTE Committee understand year-to-year progress.

The CTE Committee staff has incorporated these revisions throughout the 2024-2025 School Year with positive results and those are reflected within this 2025-2026 SY Deployment Plan and CTE ERT protocol. These revisions have made significant improvements in the CTE ERT making meaningful observations while visiting an LEA.

Conclusion

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") requires the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to "establish, administer and supervise" a CTE Expert Review Team (ERT) Program for schools in Maryland. The three phases to the CTE ERT Program are designed to discover in Phase 1, analyze and assist in Phase 2, and assess in Phase 3.

In Phase 1, the CTE ERT Program has and will continue to discover what CTE looks like in Maryland, specifying what common challenges the State faces along with other observations the CTE ERT can gather on each visit. It is important for Phase 1's protocol for observations to stay open-ended so that the CTE Committee can gather as much information without practicing confirmation bias or limiting the CTE ERT Program's ability to report findings. The CTE ERT Program accomplishes this by visiting all 24 LEAs. Each visit requires a 120-minute orientation a week before the visit, a full-day visit lasting from 8am-3pm, and a 60-minute debrief a week after the visit. During the CTE ERT visit, the team conducts focus groups and interviews, while also making observations on school tours. Although the LEA provides self-reported data, LEAs across the State have different methods and measurements for this data, so it must be understood in the context the data was gathered in. All of the CTE ERT's findings from a visit will be compiled into a post-visit report, which will ideally take eight weeks to complete and validate with the team and LEA CTE Director or Administrator. CTE Committee staff will compile all the findings from the CTE ERT visits into its annual report, which will be published every December. Since the conception of the CTE ERT Program, there have been visits to 13 LEAs and 23 schools, which is 10% of the 230 schools in Maryland with CTE offerings. In the 2025-2026 SY, the CTE ERT Program will complete visits to 11 more LEAs, which means the CTE ERT Program is on track to create the baseline for Phase 1.

Phase 2 will move the CTE ERT Program from discovery to analysis and assistance. The CTE ERT Program will take the common challenges found in Phase 1 and develop technical assistance sessions to address those challenges. Phase 2 will also develop systemic data gathering to overcome the data collection hurdles faced in Phase 1. The specifics for Phase 2 will be finalized in the spring of 2026, once the CTE Committee has a more comprehensive understanding for the state of CTE in Maryland. Phase 3 will focus on assessment and evaluation to more effectively achieve *Blueprint* goals. Phase 3's goals are broad for now, but the CTE Committee will plan out Phase 3 once the CTE ERT Program is well into Phase 2.

In order to improve CTE across Maryland, the CTE ERT Program will continue its phased approach to fundamentally reimagine and redesign career-connected learning and career pathways to ensure all of Maryland's students have real access to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers.

Please feel free to reach out to the CTE Committee or CTE Committee staff at gwdb.cte@maryland.gov to answer any questions, comments, or concerns.

Appendix | CTE ERT Tools

A. **LEA Brief**: Provided to CTE ERT members in advance of a visit. Attached is an example from the Worcester County Public Schools visit in October 2025.
B. **School Visit Agenda**: Detailed day of schedule for CTE ERT pilot visit. Attached is an example from the Anne Arundel County Public Schools pilot visit in May 2024.
C. **Focus Group Protocol and Interview Questions**: Script for the beginning of the focus groups and priority questions, as well as additional questions, specific for the type of focus group (i.e. school leadership, CTE teachers, CTE students, and career coaches).
D. **CTE ERT Visit Look-Fors**: Guidance on items CTE ERT members should look for and consider when visiting a school.
E. **Debrief Notes Organizer**: Note taking tool for CTE ERT members to organize thoughts and submit to the CTE ERT manager for review and consideration in the post-visit report.
F. **Post-Visit Report**: Sample template of the post-visit report. Attached is an outlined example structure from the Worcester County Public Schools pilot visit in Fall 2024. The full report has not been provided as it needs to be finalized with LEA admins.
G. **Preliminary Findings**: A set of strengths and challenges the CTE ERT observed as common and/or impactful among the LEAs the CTE ERT visited in the 2024-2025 SY.
H. **CTE ERT Strengths and Challenges**: After visiting 11 LEAs, the CTE Committee staff reflected on the CTE ERT's important strengths and challenges over the 2024-2025 SY.
I. **CTE ERT Requirements in Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article §5–412**: This is the statute that specifies the scope, purpose, and protocols for the CTE Expert Review Team Program.

Appendix A | Sample LEA Brief Template

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) BRIEF
CTE Expert Review Team Visit
[LEA]

LEA CTE LEAD STAFF	
Name	Role(s)

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS WITH CTE	

LEA CTE CENTER(S)

CTE ERT VISIT	
Date	School(s)

LEA CTE ENROLLMENT, PARTICIPATION and COMPLETION RATES

	LEA NAME	CTE
Enrollment		
Total Enrollment *(# of all **HS students**)*		
Total Enrollment *(# of all **graduating students**)*		
CTE[19]		
CTE Participation Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*		
CTE Concentration Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*		
CTE Completers Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*		
IRC Completion Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)[20]*		
Apprenticeship and Other Work-Based Learning[21]		
Work-Based Learning Participants[22] *(# of all **graduating students**)*		
Dual Enrollment Participants[23] *(# of all **graduating students**)*		
Dual Enrollment Completers[24] *(# of all **graduating students**)*		

[19] CTE Participants are students completing not less than one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Concentrators are students who have completed at least two courses and are enrolled in a third course in a single MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Completers are students who meet all requirements in a state-approved CTE program of study, typically three or four courses.

[20] Defined as the percentage of all graduating students who have earned an IRC (as defined by the CTE Committee).

[21] Participation is defined as the number of all high school students or all graduating students who have participated in the high school portion of a registered apprenticeship (RA) or an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA). Completion is defined as the number of all graduating students who have completed the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) or have completed both an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA) and an IRC (YA completers who don't earn an IRC will not count towards 45% goal).

[22] Work-based learning includes internships, job shadowing, and other job-based experiences.

[23] Participation is defined as the number of all graduating students participating in dual enrollment (does not count towards the 45% goal unless they earn an IRC).

[24] Dual enrollment completers is defined as the number of all graduating students who earned college credit through dual enrollment.

Apprenticeship Participants *(# of all **HS students**)*	RA: YA:
Apprenticeship Participants *(# of all **graduating students**)*	RA: YA:
Apprenticeship Completers *(# of **graduating students**)*	RA: YA:
Progress Towards 45% Goal[25]	

LEA CTE OFFERINGS

CTE Program Enrollment

Program Name	Total Enrollment (SY2026)	Overenrolled or Underenrolled?	Number of Students on Waitlist

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[25] This metric is calculated by adding together the Apprenticeship Completion Rate (RA completers plus YA completers who also earn an IRC) and the IRC Completion Rate (based on draft guidance from the CTE Committee), divided by the total number of graduating students.

Progress Towards the 45% Goal:
- **What are you projecting, for next school year, in growth towards the 45% goal for your district?**

- **What are your plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships in your LEA?**

Program Plans for Future
- **Are there any new programs you plan on adding to your current programming within the next 2 school years?**
  - **Why are you adding/not adding the program(s)?**

- **Are there any current programs you plan on expanding upon within the next 2 school years?**
  -

- **Are there any programs you are taking away within the next 2 school years?**

    - **Why are you taking away the program(s)?**

Enrollment Practices
- **How do students enroll in programs?**
    -

- **Are all CTE programs offered to all students?**
    -

- **Can a student participate in a CTE program at another school?**
    -

Program Design
- **What are some best practices from CTE in your LEA that you think are worth sharing with other CTE programs across the state?**
    -

LEA Support for Schools
- **How is CTE financial support structured within the LEA?**
    -

- **How is CTE staffing structured within the LEA?**
    -

Career Exploration
- **What career exploration is available to students in your LEA?**
    - .
- **How do the students access their career coach(es)?**
    -
- **How does/do the career coach(es) serve students in your LEA?**

INFORMATION FOR VISITING SCHOOLS

School Name

School Leadership: School Contact:
School Website:

Overview of Meeting Participants

LEA Lead CTE Designee, School Administrators & Staff

Name	Role	Location

CTE Teachers and Faculty

School Name

Name	Subject	Years in Position	Classes
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CTE PROGRAMS AND ENROLLMENT

ENROLLMENT	CLUSTER	CTE PROGRAM	2023/2024 ENROLL-MENT #	COMPLETION RATE (% '24)	IRC (% '24, using CTE Committee approved IRC list)
Total Enrollment:					

OVERVIEW OF CTE PROGRAMS

A complete list and full descriptions of all courses offered in Worcester County Public Schools can be found in the Course Catalog. CTE Course descriptions can be found beginning on page 63.[26]

LEA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Maryland	LEA Name
District Student Demographics (2023)		
% Asian		
% American Indian / Alaska Native		
% African American		
% Hispanic		
% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander		
% Two or More Races		
% White		
% Students with Disabilities		
# of Multi-Lingual Learners		
% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)		
Child Poverty Rate % (2022)		
Unemployment Rate % (2024)		

[26]

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Nearby Universities & Community Colleges

University/College Name

Economic Profile

Educational Attainment[27]

Leading Business Groups[28]

Company	Industry	Size Category

27
28

	CTE ERT Deployment Plan 2025-2026 SY	July 2025	

Appendix B | Sample School Visit Agenda

Visit Date: **[MONTH] [DATE], 2025** Time: **8:00am-3:30pm**	*LEA: [LEA NAME]* *Location 1:* **[HIGH SCHOOL NAME]** [HIGH SCHOOL ADDRESS: STREET NUMBER STREET NAME, CITY, MD ZIP CODE] *Location 2:* **[HIGH SCHOOL NAME]** [HIGH SCHOOL ADDRESS: STREET NUMBER STREET NAME, CITY, MD ZIP CODE]	Arrival Time, Location 1: **8:00am-8:15am** Arrival Time, Location 2: **12:10pm-12:25pm**

[LEA Name]

LOCATION 1: [HIGH SCHOOL LOCATION 1 NAME]					
Team 1: [TEAM MEMBERS]			**Team 2:** [TEAM MEMBERS]		
Time	**Activity**		**Time**	**Activity**	
8:00am-8:30am	Meet and Greet		**8:00am-8:30am**	Meet and Greet	
8:30am-9:10am	Classroom Visits	[SUBJECT]	**8:30am-9:10am**	Classroom Visits	[SUBJECT]
		[SUBJECT]			[SUBJECT]
		[SUBJECT]			[SUBJECT]
		[SUBJECT]			[SUBJECT]
9:10am-9:20am	Break		**9:10am-9:20am**	Break	
9:25am-10:05am (45 minutes)	Focus Group Location:		**9:25am-10:05am (45 minutes)**	Focus Group Location:	

10:10am-10:55am (45 minutes)	Focus Group Location:		**10:10am-10:55am (45 minutes)**	Focus Group Location:
11:00am-12:00pm	Lunch/Transition to [Location 2]		**11:00am-12:00pm**	Lunch/Transition to [Location 2]
LOCATION 2: [HIGH SCHOOL LOCATION 1 NAME]				
12:10pm-12:300pm	Meet and Greet		**12:10pm-12:30pm**	Meet and Greet
12:35pm-1:15pm	Classroom visits		**12:35pm-1:15pm**	Classroom visits
1:15pm-1:25pm	Break		**1:15pm-1:25pm**	Break
1:25pm-2:15pm (45 minutes)	Focus Group Location:		**1:30pm-2:15pm (45 minutes)**	Focus Group Location:
2:20pm-3:05pm (45 minutes)	Focus Group Location:		**2:20pm-3:05pm (45 minutes)**	Focus Group Location:
3:05pm-3:30pm	End of Day Debrief (ERT Members)		**3:05pm-3:30 pm**	End of Day Debrief (ERT Members)

Focus Group Participants-[LEA NAME]			
LOCATION 1: [HIGH SCHOOL NAME]			
CTE Lead/Administrator	**Teachers**	**Guidance Counselors, Career Coach(es) & WBL Staff**	**Students in Focus Group**
[NAME] [TITLE]	[NAME] [TITLE]	[NAME] [TITLE]	Student Name CTE Pathway

LOCATION 2: [HIGH SCHOOL NAME]			
CTE Lead/Administrator	**Teachers**	**Guidance Counselors, Career Coach(es) & WBL Staff**	**Students in Focus Group**
[NAME] [TITLE]	[NAME] [TITLE]	[NAME] [TITLE]	Student Name CTE Pathway

Appendix C | Focus Group Protocol and Interview Questions

Maryland
GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

CTE ERT Visit
Interview & Focus Group Questions

CTE Committee Expert Review Team

CTE Committee, Governor's Workforce Development Board
SY 2024-2025
Phase 1

Focus Group Best Practices

To be read by CTE ERT during Orientation

- **Stay Focused.** Focus groups are conversations with a purpose; remind both the CTE ERT and focus group participants what our purpose is. The CTE ERT is not here to provide our perspective, any solutions, assessments, or inform the LEA. Our role here is to make observations and collect our observations into a report identifying the state of CTE in Maryland and common challenges we can provide Technical Assistance for.
- **Ask Questions and Be Curious.** Focus groups run best when the CTE ERT focuses on asking questions and actively listening. If you need to, ask participants to repeat themselves. Ask follow-up questions. Be curious.
- **Keep Track of Time.** Time flies by in the focus groups, so the facilitator needs to have a five-minute warning so both the CTE ERT and the participants know time is starting to run out. If the facilitator hasn't yet, move to the "Important Questions" with at least five minutes left. .
- **Speak Up.** The CTE ERT records focus groups (**except students**), but the range on the recorder isn't great, so we need folks to speak up. If there are announcements or bells going over the intercom, pause because the recorder and our transcription service won't be able to differentiate.
- **Cut Any Cross-Talk.** The CTE ERT should not be having conversations with each other during the focus group. It's not only disrespectful to focus group participants, but it also disrupts our transcription services.
- **Create a Safer Space.** Brief introductions and some light humor at the beginning of the focus group can ease participants to provide more authentic and honest reflections.
- **Be Mindful of Non-Verbal Cues.** So much is said before speaking, so please be intentional with non-verbal cues that may distract participants or make participants uncomfortable.
- **Summarize and Validate Participants.** We are here to observe and listen, so remember to validate participants' perspective with an accurate summary of what a few participants say.
- **Convey Appreciation.** Focus group participants take time out of their busy days to provide their perspective. Don't forget to thank them for their participation and explain how it will help improve CTE across the State.

Focus Group Reminders

To be used by team facilitator for focus group participants before starting

- We're here on behalf of the CTE Committee, committed to improving CTE programs in line with Maryland's goals outlined in the Blueprint.
- Our team represents a variety of different perspectives. Our members here today are teachers, administrators, school leaders, researchers, employers, local workforce board members, and CTE Committee staff and board members.
- Our purpose in this visit is to try to understand what is in place now in your LEA, including plans for expanding or strengthening existing programs and current challenges. We also want to identify any strong practices in place that we might be able to highlight statewide. These visits will also inform the CTE Committee's development of the statewide CTE framework.
- We are not here to "assess" or grade CTE programming or CTE teachers in schools or LEAs. We are here to observe, not judge.
- After the visit, CTE Committee staff will draft a LEA report summarizing what we saw and heard, including our understanding of the LEA's CTE strategy, current strengths and challenges, and suggestions to help the LEA reach its goals.
- We look forward to hearing about your experiences and your thoughts on what's working and where we can support CTE here in your LEA.
- We would like to record this session (**<u>except student groups</u>**) to capture your thoughts accurately—does that work for you all? To be clear, this recording is only for note-taking purposes; we ensure confidentiality meaning no names will be cited in our reports.
- Your contributions today will help us improve CTE programs both here and statewide. Any questions before we start?

Questions for CTE Teachers

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed. Be sure to save at least five minutes to ask "Important Questions".

Priority Questions:

1. What program do you teach in and how long have you been in your role? What is your background in this area?

2. Can you give us an overview of your CTE program? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, IRCs, completion rates, post-grad options*

3. Do you have contact with employers in your industry? If so, what partnerships have been most beneficial for students?

4. Where do students from your program go after graduating (i.e., further training, work, college, etc.)?

5. What support do you and/or the school provide to help CTE students develop post-graduation plans? *Are your students getting time with a Career Coach as part of that support?*

6. If you could redesign your subject's program of study, what would you change?

7. What professional learning opportunities are available for you?

Important Questions to Ask with At Least 5 Minutes Left:

8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your school's CTE programs?

9. What do you need as a CTE teacher that you feel you may not be getting?

10. What do you see as the key CTE challenges facing your school now?

Additional Questions:

- How do you collaborate with your colleagues (CTE and academic teachers)? How do you collaborate with other colleagues within this LEA?

- Do any of your programs have school-based businesses that serve the school community and/or local clients?

- Do you think the certification requirements for CTE teachers are well-aligned to what was needed to teach in the area you teach in?

- How do you measure the effectiveness of your CTE program, and what data or feedback informs changes or improvements?

- What CTSOs (Career and Technical Student Organizations) do you all participate in? What clubs/programs/sports do y'all participate in? Can you speak to those and how they help students?

Questions for CTE Students

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed. Be sure to save at least five minutes to ask "Important Questions".

Priority Questions:

1. What year are you, what program are you enrolled in, and why did you choose the program you're in?

2. How did you learn about the program you are enrolled in now? What was the process of getting enrolled into the program?

3. How has your experience in the classroom been for your CTE classes? How is it different from your other classes?

4. Have you had any work experience as part of your program?

5. If you have a different home school, how do you get to your CTE program and / or to your job (if applicable)?

6. Will you graduate with any certifications/credentials or college credits?

7. What is your plan post-graduation, and how did you develop it? Did you work with a career coach or career counselor to help with this plan?

8. How much do you know about careers in your industry (salary, training paths)?

Important Questions to Ask with At Least 5 Minutes Left:

9. What would you say is the best thing about your program? What are some of your CTE program's strengths?

10. If you could change anything in your program, what would it be? What challenges have you faced in your CTE program?

11. Looking back on when you first enrolled in your CTE program, what advice would you give to students who are currently considering CTE as an option?

Additional Questions:

- Are there any CTE programs you think the school/LEA should offer that it does not now?

- Have you participated in any competitions or extracurricular activities related to your CTE program? If so, what was your experience like?

- How well do you feel your CTE program is preparing you for the workforce or further education in your chosen field?

- How do your family and friends perceive your enrollment in a CTE program, and has their perception changed since you started?

- How does your school promote CTE programs to students, and what improvements would you suggest to increase awareness and interest?

Questions for Career Counselors/Coaches

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed. Be sure to save at least five minutes to ask "Important Questions".

Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in this role? What is your title? Career Coach? Career Counselor? Something else?

2. How were you hired into this role? What was the process?

3. How is career counseling organized at your school, and in this district? Do you work closely with school counselors?

4. Is there a work-based learning coordinator and if so what is their scope of work and how do they interact with career counselors/coaches?

5. How does the career counseling staff stay up-to-date with CTE programming and workforce trends in the LEA and the state?

6. How are students introduced to CTE programs? Who leads this introduction?

7. How are students informed on CTE programs, work-based learning opportunities, CTSOs, clubs, *etc*.?

8. Do students have opportunities for career exploration/education in middle school? In high school?

9. How are CTE students supported in planning for post-CCR pathways?

10. How are CTE students supported in making post-graduation plans?

11. How are parents and families introduced to programs? Are there other efforts to publicize CTE in the community?

Important Questions to Ask with At Least 5 Minutes Left:

12. What do you see as the strengths of career coaching/career counseling in this school/district? What is going well? What are you celebrating?

13. What do you see as the challenges of career coaching/career counseling in this school/district? What has been a challenge?

Additional Questions:

- Do you track post-graduation outcomes, such as enrolling in further education /training or entering the workforce?

- In what ways does the school involve parents and the community in the CTE program?

- How are students who change their mind about a program/career path supported?

- How do you think the CTE guidance could be improved? Is feedback on guidance and support collected from students?

- Are there issues with students being able to access CTE programs? If so, what are the reasons and what are current strategies to address access issues from your perspective?

Questions for School/LEA Leadership

Instructions for focus group lead: Focus groups with School/LEA Leadership are rare since we receive most of this information through the Brief and Orientation.

Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed. Be sure to save at least five minutes to ask "Important Questions".

Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in CTE?

2. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your LEA/school's CTE program, and what have you made the most progress on recently?

3. Can you give us an overview of the structure of CTE programs in your school / LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, Range of programs, Application process, Transportation*

4. Is there capacity for all interested students to participate in CTE programs? Are there any barriers to enrollment?

5. For those students who are not able to enroll and stay on a waitlist, what's the process for those students? What happens if they don't get off the waitlist?

6. How does the LEA/district update CTE programs? What are some current plans you have for adding new programs, expanding existing programs or eliminate current programs?

7. What are the school's current priorities for CTE in your school/LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Eliminate/add programs, Apprenticeship, Increasing enrollment, Working with industry*

Important Questions to Ask with At Least 5 Minutes Left:

8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your LEA/school's CTE program, and what have you made the most progress on recently?

9. What do you see as the key challenges facing your LEA/school now in CTE?

10. Where would you like the LEA to be in five years in regards to CTE?

Additional Questions:

● Are any CTE teachers earning National Board Certification? If so, have they been able to move into differentiated roles?

- How do you collaborate with local business and industry and community colleges?

- Do you have sufficient teachers for current programs? If not, what are the issues in recruiting them?

- What's your process for reviewing the IRCs currently offered to students as part of their CTE program?

- What measures are in place to assess the long-term impact of CTE programs on students' career trajectories and contributions to the local economy?

- Do certain programs have higher completion rates than others?

- Are there clear pathways from current CTE programs to community college certificate and degree programs?

- What strategies are employed to raise awareness and improve perceptions of CTE programs among students, parents, and the broader community?

- In your opinion, how well does the programming at your school align with key (high-growth, high-wage) industries in your community and statewide?

Appendix D | CTE ERT Visit Look Fors

CTE Look Fors

CTE Programming

Things to look for:
- Pathways leading to IRCs and Registered Apprenticeships.
- Programs aligned with industry needs in local/state target sectors.
- Information on programs for students to make informed decisions.
- Connections and collaborations with industry experts and professionals.
- Method for admins/teachers to respond to industry/students' evolving needs.
- Expansion of CTE offerings aligned with students' interest and local/state target sectors.
- Recruitment and support of CTE teachers, including meaningful PD.
- The state of tech/software/hardware students use is in-line with the industry.
- Method for enrolling students into CTE programs and classes.
- Mentorship opportunities for teachers with industry, but no teaching experience.
- Gaps for students in "Special Populations".

Student Support & Career Coaching

Things to look for:
- Support systems for math and literacy to succeed in CTE and WBL.
- Method for monitoring student progress and success.
- Equitable access and success for students in CTE programs and WBL.
- Issues and challenges associated with transportation and scheduling.
- Ample career exploration opportunities in 8th, 9th, and 10th grades.
- Individualized counseling for students to make informed decisions about their path.
- Student engagement and interest in WBL and IRCs.
- Trophies and accomplishments, especially in competitions like SkillUSA.
- Career coach to student ratio and what the coach's support network looks like.
- Student understanding for the job opportunities in their locality.

Program Design

Things to look for:
- WBL opportunities, with plans to expand, as possible
- Programs with opportunities to earn college credits towards credentials/degrees.
- Programs that result in an IRC or are stackable towards IRCs
- Course sequences that make sense for students and result in students completing the high school programs with a useful set of skills and knowledge that enables them to move on to employment or post-secondary degrees or certifications of value

Other Guiding Questions
- What is working well in this school/LEA that may be adapted elsewhere?
- What seems missing in this school/district?
- What is the LEA's priority?
- What could help improve CTE in this school/LEA?
- What does student success look like?
- What do admins, teachers, and career coaches know about the *Blueprint*?

Appendix E | Debrief Notes Organizer

District CTE Strengths

District CTE Challenges

Takeaways for the State

Shareables *(quotes or highlights from the visit from students and/or staff*

Appendix F | Post-Visit Report

This is a brief outline for what the post-visit reports look like. This outline is in lieu of a published report because the CTE Committee staff is collaborating with the LEAs it visited in the 2024-2025 SY to validate the information in the reports.

Purpose of the CTE ERT

The main purpose of this section is to inform readers of what the post-visit report is meant to accomplish.

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future (*"the *Blueprint"),* Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, established the Career and Technical (CTE) Committee as a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). The GWDB serves as the Governor's chief strategic and policy-making body for workforce development in the State of Maryland.[29] The purpose of the CTE Committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, institutions of postsecondary education, and the workforce. The CTE Committee aims to fundamentally reimagine and redesign career-connected learning and career pathways to ensure all of Maryland's students have real access to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers.

The *Blueprint* requires the CTE Committee to establish, administer, and supervise CTE ERTs to visit schools with CTE pathways. The goals of these visits are to: 1) review alignment with *Blueprint* vision, 2) assure consistency between the CTE Framework and policies on Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) and Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs) with CTE Programs and Practices, and 3) support technical assistance needs for LEAs as they create new systems or revise existing frameworks. Ultimately, the CTE ERTs report back to the CTE Committee on progress towards the *Blueprint* outcomes and opportunities for alignment or growth.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to _____ consisted of members from various backgrounds and brought expertise in areas such as student learning, workforce development, and CTE, ensuring a comprehensive review of the LEA's CTE programs (see Appendix A).

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[29] Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.22. (2023). https://tinyurl.com/execorder01012023

About _____ County Public School System

The main purpose of this section is to inform readers about the LEA the CTE ERT visited. This section begins with a brief overview for the number of high school students in the LEA and a snapshot of CTE within the LEA. This section also starts off describing the ways this LEA is in alignment with the State's key sectors and the LWDB's key sectors.

Following this brief outline, the report then goes into detail about CTE participation, concentration, and completion rates, especially focusing on IRC Completion rates for graduating students.

This section concludes with a brief explanation for the expertise and experience CTE teachers bring to the LEA and an overview for the enrollment process.

Summary of Visit

The main purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the overall CTE visit. This section begins with an explanation of what information the CTE ERT covered in the orientation, then dives into the CTE ERT's research and analysis protocol of completing focus groups, interviews, and observations to compile a list of strengths, challenges, and external factors of note. The Strengths, Challenges, and External (SCE) analysis is based on the more popular SWOT analysis, which also differentiates between internal and external factors, but this analysis method allows for readers, especially LEA administration, staff, and teachers understand what factors they can modify internally or advocate for externally.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXPERT REVIEW TEAM VISIT

The observations the CTE ERT made are then organized into Strengths, Challenges, or External factors with brief explanations for these observations. These observations include both where the CTE ERT made these observations as well as an overview of what it means. Each of these observations are about 200 words long to give readers clarification without overwhelming the reader with information. There are at least three strengths, three challenges, and three external factors the post-visit report references.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

The post-visit report concludes with the potential next steps the LEA should consider moving forward. The purpose of this section is to help the LEA brainstorm about how to move forward and what to prioritize, but these potential next steps are based on preliminary observations. For this reason, this section explains that the purpose of Phase 1 of the CTE ERT Deployment Plan is to create a baseline for CTE across the State and note key areas that will need Technical Assistance to achieve Blueprint *goals.*

Although the CTE ERT has presented its observations in this report, these observations and potential next steps are preliminary. The purposes of Phase 1 of the CTE ERT are to establish a baseline across Maryland and identify key challenges. While the following Potential Next Steps are preliminary, they are areas WCPS may look for improvement in and something the CTE ERT will look at more closely as the CTE Committee transitions into Phase 2 in the 2026-2027 SY. In other words, these potential next steps are not a directive, but opportunities of improvement to explore. In Phase 2, the CTE ERT will target specific areas to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state of CTE in ____.[30]

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[30] Career and Technical Education Committee. (July 1, 2024). "CTE Committee Expert Review Team Deployment Plan School Year 2024-2025." *Governor's Workforce Development Board.* https://tinyurl.com/48uerpdm

Appendix G | Preliminary Findings for the 2024-2025 School Year

Over the course of the 2024-2025 SY, the CTE ERT visited 11 LEAs and 19 schools. During this time, the CTE ERT reflected on the kind of observations they found and the CTE Committee staff put together its preliminary findings below. These preliminary findings are a set of strengths and challenges the CTE ERT observed as common among the LEAs the CTE ERT visited in the 2024-2025 SY.

Strength: Teacher Passion and Commitment to Students

The most common strength the CTE ERT observed throughout the 2024-2025 SY is how CTE teachers are the reason students enroll and succeed in CTE programs. Almost every CTE ERT visit had students and teachers mention how the CTE classes felt like a second home or a family, a space where students felt like they could be challenged in a meaningful way with effective, hands-on experiences. Teachers' passion about the subject matter was contagious, as students were excited to do the difficult work they were assigned. One teacher who had no teaching experience before the 2024-2025 SY also took on the role of an athletic coach and Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) sponsor because of how committed they were to students. CTE students developed a sense of belonging and trust with their teachers, which clearly had an impact on student success. The CTE ERT will continue to observe CTE teachers' impact on recruitment and retention of students in the 2025-2026 SY.

Strength: Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Participation

Some of the LEAs the CTE ERT visited had strong engagement with co-curricular CTSOs like SkillsUSA, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and Educators Rising. Engagement with co-curricular CTSOs seemed to be a positive move to lead students towards success. Maryland students demonstrated a competitive spirit as many were eager to win their respective SkillsUSA competitions, some of whom won national competitions and moved on to compete internationally. The CTE ERT visits revealed CTSOs have a positive impact on student success in CTE and are looking for ways to better establish and/or expand CTSOs. The CTE ERT will continue to observe CTSOs for communities of practice, barriers, and takeaways moving forward into the 2025-2026 SY.

Strength: Unique Learning Experiences for Students

The most common focus group input from students revolved around how different the learning experiences were in CTE classes compared to general education classes. Whether it was working on donated cars in Auto Tech or using a dummy in BioMed classes, students always remarked on the effectiveness of hands-on learning. Schools that had cohort models where students would go through CTE courses together were particularly effective at creating a comfortable atmosphere for students to challenge themselves. Students in focus groups remarked how hands-on classroom experiences around people they were comfortable with led to learning that lasts because the camaraderie helped them get out of their comfort zone. Regardless of the cohort model, many students explained how the

different learning in CTE offerings not only led to more engagement in CTE offerings, but it also may have helped improve their work in other classes as well.

Challenge: Transportation Hurdles

The most common challenge LEAs faced across Maryland was transportation. While the details of the transportation hurdles differ from LEA to LEA, it was the most common challenge the CTE ERT observed in the 2024-2025 SY. For some, transportation issues revolved around reaching students in rural areas. On the other hand, some students in urban centers had 90-minute bus rides to get to their CTE Center. Meanwhile, students in a suburban area explained how inconsistent the bus was and how one student had to bike many miles to get to school on roads without bike lanes. No matter what the context, every LEA the CTE ERT visited had major challenges with transportation.

The CTE ERT visits and research have revealed some LEAs have strategized unique solutions to their transportation challenges. For instance, one LEA creatively braided funds to purchase a van for shuttling students to a community college, career exploration events, and field trips. Another LEA has a program called "Cross-Campus" that provides transportation for students wishing to complete a program not offered at their home school. In the 2025-2026 SY, the CTE ERT will pay close attention to how LEAs come up with creative solutions to transportation challenges so the CTE Committee staff can share with the State.

Challenge: Career Counselor to Student Ratios

The current career counseling system in Maryland is still in its initial stages of implementation. As it continues to grow and expand, it will continue to encounter challenges, one of which the CTE ERT observed is the number of career counselors available for students. Career counselor focus groups revealed some counselors are overburdened, with one LEA reporting as high as 3,400 students per career coach. Many of the LEAs the CTE ERT visited had one career counselor available for multiple high schools. Some LEAs only had one career counselor available for all the middle schools in their county. Focus groups also revealed a substantial amount of students did not know whom their career counselor was or what role the career counselor played.

The CTE ERT visits and research revealed some LEAs have already developed innovative solutions around career counseling. One LEA uses a career champion model, with ten career champions in each high school to support the work of career coaching. Champions may be teachers, counselors, IB coordinators, *etc.*, and these champions earn a stipend for their work. Another LEA had school counselors develop CTE Program of Study binders to help keep a consistent and accurate line of communication to students about CTE offerings. No matter their role, anyone could access the Program of Study binders to help guide students through CTE offerings in their LEA. In the 2025-2026 SY, the CTE ERT will continue to monitor how LEAs come up with creative solutions to career counseling implementation.

Challenge: Scheduling Conflicts

Scheduling hurdles and conflicts are also a common issue the CTE ERT observed in the 2024-2025 SY. For some LEAs, scheduling conflicts were between students' primary high

school and the CTE Center. One CTE Center had to adapt to three different bell schedules within their LEA. For others, the scheduling hurdles arose because of the transportation hurdles mentioned above. One focus group of students reported they consistently arrived late to their first period, leading to lower grades in that class. Meanwhile, students at a different LEA told the CTE ERT in focus groups that they would have to abandon their CTE pathway so they could enroll in an AP class because it was only offered at the same time as their CTE course. Both students and CTE teachers revealed their interest in having longer class periods to more effectively accomplish learning goals.

LEAs have found some innovative ways to overcome scheduling conflicts and provide equitable access to students. For instance, several LEAs offered evening and twilight CTE programs to maximize facility use and expand access to students with different scheduling needs. Another LEA took advantage of the block scheduling to do more hands-on lab time and deeper engagement in CTE coursework. In the 2025-2026 SY, the CTE ERT will continue to pay close attention to how LEAs come up with unique solutions to scheduling hurdles.

In the 2024-2025 SY, the CTE Committee staff learned a great deal about the current state of CTE in Maryland. As CTE continues to transform across the state, the CTE Committee staff has made some key observations for the success stories and the common hurdles within the 11 LEAs the CTE ERT visited. The CTE Committee staff sees the CTE ERT as being an incredibly important part of fundamentally reimagining and redesigning career-connected learning and career pathways to ensure all of Maryland's students have real access to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers. With these preliminary observations, the CTE Committee staff will continue to investigate the state of CTE as it completes Phase 1 in the 2025-2026 SY. The CTE Committee will provide a more in depth analysis of the state of CTE in its Annual Report, due December 1, 2025.

After visiting 11 LEAs and 19 schools, which is 8.2% of the 230 schools in Maryland that have CTE offerings, over the course of the 2024-2025 SY, the CTE Committee staff have completed year one of Phase 1 for the CTE ERT Deployment Plan.[31] Including the two pilot LEAs, the CTE ERTs have visited 13 LEAs and 23 schools, which is 10% of the 230 schools in Maryland that have CTE offerings.

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[31] Had the CTE ERT been able to visit Howard County, the team would have achieved its goal of visiting 10% of high schools with CTE offerings.

Appendix H | CTE ERT Strengths and Challenges for the 2024-2025 School Year

The pilot visits for the CTE ERT in Spring of 2024 revealed the CTE Committee staff need to have a flexible method of conducting visits and observations. While the CTE Committee staff kept focus groups, observations, interviews, briefs, debriefs, and other components more-or-less the same, staffing has been one of the biggest hurdles the CTE Committee staff has faced in gathering, analyzing, processing, and disseminating information from CTE ERT visits. The CTE Research Data Analyst was hired in March 2025 and the data reporting methods from LEAs are still inconsistent and, at times, inaccurate. For this reason, CTE Committee staff are not providing an analysis of data from LEA briefs in this document because these data need to be validated with collaborators within the LEAs and MSDE. CTE Committee staff will also be outlining a more streamlined process for LEA data reporting.

Strength: Engagement and Interest

All 85 participants, some of whom went on multiple visits, have provided positive feedback about their experience visiting an LEA and partaking in the CTE ERT. Participants, especially those who are CTE teachers or administrators, noted how beneficial it was to observe how another LEA functions at both the macro level in the CTE ERT Orientation and in the CTE ERT LEA Brief, and the micro level with classroom observations, school tours, focus groups, and interviews. No matter their role, participants take what they learned back with them to whatever role and responsibilities they normally hold. For instance, one apprenticeship sponsor took what they learned in their CTE ERT visit back to their employer and they decided to sponsor more apprentices. Another important note is how the CTE ERT had camaraderie amongst its members. These individuals come from varying areas of expertise and this seems to be one of the few opportunities for these people to collaborate. In all 11 CTE ERT visits, participants have been interested and engaged in making useful observations for the CTE ERT to accomplish its goals. Moreover, many of the CTE ERT participants provided detailed notes and filled out post-visit surveys to help inform the post-visit reports. Many of the CTE ERT participants have provided input to CTE Committee staff that they want to participate in more visits. Team member engagement and interest was a major strength for the CTE ERT after its first year. The CTE ERT visits in the 2024-2025 SY had an average of 10 participant team members.

Strength: Gathering Information in a Valid and Reliable Way

The CTE ERT's research methods demonstrate one of its greatest strengths. Best practices for research require two important components, validity and reliability. Validity is developed through peer review, which is an integral component of the CTE ERT, as the team is composed of experts who come from varying backgrounds collaborating with one another. When the CTE ERT comes back together for the debrief, experts present their observations and findings and this is where the team has the opportunity to conduct peer review in a

meaningful way. Everyone brings their own areas of expertise and these conversations lead to the team learning about perspectives and areas of expertise, resulting in small-scale peer review sessions. On the other hand, reliability is developed through consistency and multiple trials, which is why the CTE ERT has made sure each CTE ERT visit accomplishes the same objectives and asked the same focus group questions to maintain consistency. Consistency, which is so important to reliable research, can only be developed through repeated trials, and the CTE ERT will continue its consistency into year two of Phase 1 for the CTE ERT. With reliability and validity as the two pillars holding up the CTE ERT's research, the method for gathering information and making observations is a strength.

Strength: Emphasis on Observing Equitable Access for All

The CTE Committee has made it clear that equitable access for all is an important goal and the CTE Committee staff have made this a focus point through its observations in Phase 1. Because the CTE ERT brings experts from various areas, backgrounds, and biases in conversation with one another, teams can more effectively observe gaps and barriers in equitable access. The CTE ERT's emphasis on observing barriers to equitable access for all is one of the CTE ERT's greatest strengths and further enhances the CTE ERT's research protocols. Whether it was observing racial disparities between students and teachers or finding enrollment gaps for students with disabilities, the CTE ERT kept a vigilant eye for ensuring equitable access for all. Perhaps an important reason for this strength is that members of the CTE Committee staff have experience working in different roles within education, so they are familiar with common hurdles, especially for students who come from historically exploited populations. In order for LEAs across Maryland to achieve *Blueprint* goals and conduct effective research, it is paramount for the CTE ERT to continue making observations on equitable access for all, in addition to emphasizing validity and reliability. Moving forward into the 2025-2026 SY, it is crucial the CTE ERT continues to ensure equitable access for all is a top priority for observations during visits.

Challenge: Staffing

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the CTE Committee staff is workload and staffing. The CTE Committee staff announced three new hires between March and May 2025. The new hires, a Research Data Analyst, Senior Director, and a Program Manager, will provide a huge relief, allowing the team to complete a backlog of work. The CTE ERT Manager departed from the team in July 2025. The CTE ERT Manager set up all aspects of the CTE ERT and has been on every visit thus far, and the GWDB will be hiring a replacement in the near future. Originally, the CTE Committee staff anticipated it would take six weeks to complete post-visit reports. With just two staff available to work on CTE ERT reports, while also planning and administering visits, there was limited availability to write these reports. As the new hires complete onboarding, the CTE Committee staff is estimating an eight-week timeline for CTE ERT post-visit reports is a feasible goal for finalizing the reports and validating the data; however, the CTE Committee staff also anticipates hurdles due to the departure of the CTE ERT Manager.

Challenge: Data Collection

While it is true the method for gathering information and making observations is a strength, collecting data has been a challenge for the CTE Committee staff. In March 2025, the CTE Committee staff began onboarding the Research Data Analyst. Much of the information provided to the CTE Committee staff is self-reported by the LEA, and therefore, needs to be validated with both the LEA and partners like MSDE, DWDAL, and AIB. Thanks to partners like MSDE, DWDAL, and AIB, and the hard work LEA representatives have put towards collaborating with the CTE Committee staff, data collection has become less of a challenge as the year has progressed. As the Research Data Analyst completes their onboarding, the long-term goal for this position is to create a streamlined process for data collection that can take the burden off of the LEAs' shoulders to self-report data and instead, validate the data the CTE Committee staff already has. In other words, instead of asking the LEA representatives to complete the LEA Brief, the LEA will review a completed LEA Brief and offer edits and revisions or approve it. The CTE Committee staff is collaborating with partners at MSDE, DWDAL, and AIB, in addition to working closely with the LEAs, will strategize a long-term solution.

Challenge: Maintaining a Strategic Balance Between Flexibility and Consistency

After the pilot CTE ERT visits in Spring 2024, the CTE Committee staff learned that each CTE ERT visit must be flexible to most effectively adapt to the local conditions; however, research is most effective when it is reliable and consistent. Finding the right balance between being flexible to effectively observe the local conditions and progress towards *Blueprint* goals while being consistent with methods of research has been a major hurdle for the CTE Committee staff. LEAs run on different schedules, so agendas must be flexible. Further complicating agendas was the availability of students, teachers, career coaches/counselors and school counselors to participate in focus groups. After several visits, the CTE Committee staff observed that the classroom visits did not effectively serve the purpose of the CTE ERT because they were simultaneously disruptive to regular classroom instruction and did not provide enough useful information or observations. Beginning in the new calendar year with the Cecil County CTE ERT visit, the CTE Committee staff began doing school tours instead of classroom visits. This allowed the CTE ERTs to dedicate more time to focus groups, which provide more qualitative information. This demonstrates the CTE Committee staff's ability to be consistent with research methods, while still allowing for flexibility to adapt to the local conditions where the CTE ERT visit is held.

After completing Year 1 of Phase 1 of the CTE ERT, the CTE Committee staff reflected on the strengths to hone and challenges to overcome. To recap, these strengths include CTE ERT engagement and interest from participants and the CTE ERT's ability to gather information in a reliable and valid method of research, while ensuring equitable access for all. The challenges the CTE ERT faced include: staffing needs, data collection processes, and maintaining a strategic balance between flexibility and consistency. These strengths and challenges have been useful to reflect on as the CTE Committee staff strategizes for how to continuously improve on these CTE ERT visits moving into the 2025-2026 SY.

Appendix I | Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article §5–412: Statute Text for CTE ERT

(a)　(1)　In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

　　(2)　"CTE Committee" means the Career and Technical Education Committee established under § 21–207 of this article.

　　(3)　"Program" means the CTE Expert Review Team Program.

(b)　(1)　The CTE Committee shall establish, administer, and supervise a CTE Expert Review Team Program for schools with career and technical education programs and pathways.

　　(2)　Subject to the provisions of this subsection, the program will have the same purpose, structure, training, and reporting requirements as the Expert Review Team Program established by the Department under § 5–411 of this subtitle.

　　(3)　(i)　The CTE Committee shall select the members of CTE Expert Review Teams in the Program.

　　　　(ii)　The CTE Committee shall select CTE Expert Review Team members who, to the extent practicable, reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender diversity of the population of the public school students, from the following groups:

　　　　　　1.　Highly regarded career and technical education teachers who are represented by teachers' organizations that, for purposes of collective bargaining, represent a majority of teachers in the State or in a local school system;

　　　　　　2.　School leaders;

　　　　　　3.　Employers;

　　　　　　4.　Trade unions; and

　　　　　　5.　Apprenticeship and internship sponsors.

　　(4)　During a school visit, a CTE Expert Review Team shall conduct interviews, observe classes, and use other data to:

　　　　(i)　Determine whether student progress is insufficient toward successful completion of the CTE pathway; and

　　　　(ii)　Develop recommendations, measures, and strategies to address the issues identified by the CTE Expert Review Team.

(5)   After a CTE Expert Review Team issues a report, the school, the county board, the employers, and apprenticeship or internship sponsors shall:

(i)   Review the report and recommendations; and

(ii)   If necessary, submit a plan to the CTE Committee addressing the recommendations in the report.

(6)   (i)   Beginning on July 1, 2022, and ending July 1, 2031, the CTE Committee shall develop and submit to the Board, for approval, a plan to deploy the CTE Expert Review Teams in the following school year.

(ii)   Subject to the Board's approval, the CTE Committee shall schedule CTE Expert Review Team school visits in a manner designed to provide the CTE Committee and the Department with sufficient information to make informed decisions on the release of school funds conditioned on student performance, including adequate time for a school to respond to an Expert Review Team's report and recommendations before decisions are made regarding the retaining of school funds.

Maryland
GWDB CTE COMMITTEE

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

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