

# Career and Technical Education Programs Advisory Council Handbook

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## Introduction

Victor Valley College (VVC) has always placed a high value on workforce development through the support of strong vocational or career/technical education (CTE) programs. These programs are critical to the community and to the local economy, as they provide entry level employees and incumbent workers with the skills necessary to both improve their own standard of living, and to contribute to the growth of local businesses and industries. VVC's support of and commitment to CTE programs is evident in some of the goals adopted by its Board of Trustees ([Board Policy 1200, District Vision, Mission & Goals](#)):

- Create sustainability and environmental stewardship for our colleagues, our students, and our community.
- Become an agile learning organization consistent with the needs of students and the communities that the college serves.
- Develop and deliver enriching courses for community members and businesses seeking additional training and development.

Advisory Councils have been used successfully throughout the California Community Colleges for many years. Members provide input on the quality and relevancy of CTE instruction, and ensure partnerships between the college, business/industry, public and private agencies, and the community at large remain an integral part of the college's planning and improvement efforts. Advisory Councils are required by federal mandates regulating use of funds specifically allotted for CTE programs (e.g., Perkins); in addition, California Education Code requires the support of CTE programs through advisory councils (Title 5, Section 55601):

*"The governing board of each community college district participating in a vocational education program shall appoint a vocational education advisory council to develop recommendations on the program and to provide a liaison between the district and potential employers."*

## Purpose and Function of an Advisory Council

The purpose of an Advisory Council is to provide input and make recommendations to the faculty and administration on changes in direction for career and technical education, including suggestions for improvement, expansion, and innovation.

The function for Advisory Councils has become more important as technological changes and job requirements have increased. As such, members of each Advisory Council play an important role in curriculum and program development at VVC. Collectively, they advise VVC's educators and administrators on a variety of topics relative to their areas of expertise, and serve as valuable resources to the CTE programs they serve.

Advisory Councils do not have administrative or policy-making authority, but they serve as valuable partners in the educational process. Members are knowledgeable and interested volunteers who represent the community, local businesses, and High Desert Agencies.

A secondary function of the Advisory Council is to support the annual review of CTE programs. California Education Code mandates that every vocational/occupational or CTE training program offered by a community college district shall be reviewed every two years by the governing board of the district.

This program review must ensure that the program meets a clear labor market demand, that it does not unnecessarily duplicate other training programs, and that it demonstrates effectiveness in program completion and employment placements. Programs that do not meet these standards shall be subject to program improvement and evaluation procedures pursuant to established board policies and administrative procedures at VVC.

## **Advisory Council Membership**

The Advisory Council is a group of employers and employees from local business and industry outside the field of education. Council membership should not be limited to a narrow portion of an occupation. Members should come from a variety of backgrounds and provide broad perspectives that meet the educational needs of entry level employees and incumbent workers entering a new occupation. Programs that have articulation agreements at one or more institutions should also invite representatives from those colleges, high schools, and Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs) to serve on the Advisory Council.

Advisory Council members are selected from local business and service community by the administration and faculty from instructional departments with CTE programs. These members of the community serve alongside CTE program chairs, faculty, students, and managers/administrators. Advisory Councils should consist of 8 to 15 individuals who represent industry and diversity within the region. No more than one-third of the membership should be made up of adjunct faculty who are working in the field. Additionally adjunct faculty, full-time faculty, and college administrators may serve as ex-officio members of the Advisory Council.

Specifically, an Advisory Council should be comprised of:

- Supervisors or managers currently employed in the industry directly related to the specific program;
- Business owners familiar with entry-level employment requirements;
- Non-supervisory employees performing competencies directly related to the program;

- At least one member knowledgeable about the challenges faced by displaced workers and homemakers, second language learners, migrant workers, and other special populations;
- Recent graduates and former students with at least one year of job-related experience;
- Student learners from Career and Technical Student Organizations; and
- Faculty from other colleges, high schools and ROPs that share articulation agreements with the program.

Recruiting competent advisory members to serve on the council is extremely important. CTE Advisory Council members should be leaders in the industry. They should have technical expertise in the subject area, the influence to affect hiring, and a special interest in the quality of CTE programs at VVC.

The Advisory Council is facilitated by a community member (non-VVC employee) with support from a VVC Resource Person (a department chair, program coordinator, discipline facilitator or other VVC workforce member with knowledge of and interest in the program).

## **Advisory Council Meetings**

### *Frequency of Meetings*

California Education Code requires that all Career and Technical Advisories meet formally once a year. The dates and times for each meeting should be planned to allow for the greatest participation by members, but should occur prior to the Spring deadline for VVC's annual program review and planning process. This ensures integration of council recommendations into each program's P.R.A.I.S.E. Report.

Additional meetings are encouraged to avoid a lengthy agenda at the formal meeting. Web conferencing is a viable alternative that can be used to follow up on the annual formal meeting. It is available free of charge through CCC Confer and is accessible to all staff, faculty, and administrators throughout the California Community College system at [www.cccconfer.org](http://www.cccconfer.org).

### *Planning for the Meeting*

It is important for the Advisory Council to actively and purposefully provide programs with information and advice that leads to instructional improvement. This goal is achieved through open discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Discussions may include:

- Program-level Student Learning Outcomes and their assessment

- Quality and condition of instructional equipment
- Performance of graduates
- Changes in workforce
- Emerging trends (5 to 10 years)
- Articulation efforts

In order to deal with these issues, the agenda should include time specifically to address questions about the quality of the program. Faculty members are integral in directing the development of these questions for the council to address based on their individual subject matter expertise, their relationship to students, and their assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. Agenda Items for department breakout sessions should include:

- Introductions
- Discussion of the best way for us to interface with you and your agency
- Description and update of the programs and courses at VVC to which Advisory Council members contribute their expertise
- Discussion about possible changes to the programs and courses, including but not limited to improvement, expansion, and innovation
- Discussion about current and emerging needs in related industries that programs and courses should address
- Discussion as to whether student workers/interns can serve in council members agency/business

By addressing issues that explore the quality of a program, faculty members are better able to identify and to document where improvements should be made. Strategies can then be developed and implemented to support the goals of the college and to improve programs, courses, and overall processes at VVC.

#### Location of Meetings

Advisory meetings should take place on campus in order to provide the council access to the program, to classrooms, to equipment, and to its resources.

#### Conduct of Meetings

The Advisory Council should be organized by the VVC Resource Person—a discipline facilitator, department chair or other faculty member with planning responsibility and interest in the program's future. The VVC Resource Person and division dean have the

responsibility of making sure that Advisory Council members understand their function, responsibilities, and the role. In addition, they are responsible for completing the following tasks **prior to the meeting**:

- Securing the meeting location;
- Verifying membership;
- Preparing the agenda by consulting with department and advisory members;
- Securing hospitality funding by completing and submitting required requisitions; and
- Providing the advisory members invitation material.

Invitation materials should be sent to advisory members one month prior to the meeting to allow business and industry representatives sufficient time for scheduling. The invitation materials should include the following:

- Letter of invitation
- Agenda
- College map and parking permits
- Advisory Council Handbook

The VVC Resource Person is responsible for completing the following tasks **following the meeting**:

- Preparing the minutes and submitting copies to the council members for approval;
- Providing the Office of Instruction with advisory documentation that includes: letter of invitation, council roster, agenda, and approved minutes;
- Incorporating Advisory Council results into VVC's annual program review and planning process (aka P.R.A.I.S.E. reporting).

Developing and maintaining a functional Advisory Council is a challenging task for CTE programs. A council composed of knowledgeable and committed members who understand their role and use effective group processes is critical to its success. Programs must understand the importance of advisory input and identify questions for the council to address. The right balance with an Advisory Council is a matter of communication, of trust, and of an understanding that the council acts in the best interests of the program, its students and the community.