SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Career and Technical Education Administrators
District Administrators
School Administrators
Career and Technical Education Teachers and Instructional Leaders

FROM: Joshua Black
Interim Director, Office of Career Readiness

DATE: August 4, 2026

RE: CTE Innovative Course Renewal Update

The purpose of this memorandum is to communicate revisions to the renewal requirements for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Innovative Courses. These changes are intended to reduce administrative burden, increase flexibility for school districts, and align CTE innovative course processes with existing renewal practices for academic innovative courses.

Background

Under the current process, districts offering a CTE innovative course are required to submit a renewal application annually for up to five (5) consecutive years. At the conclusion of the five-year period, the Office of Career Readiness (OCR) conducts a formal review to determine whether the course should (1) transition to a state-recognized course or (2) be discontinued.

Academic innovative courses currently operate on a three-year renewal cycle. To provide consistency across content areas and improve efficiency, OCR is revising the CTE Innovative Course Renewal Process to reflect a similar three-year review structure.

Revised Renewal Process

Effective with future renewals, the CTE Innovative Course Renewal Process will be modified as follows:

1. Initial Approval Period
    a. Districts will submit an annual renewal application for the first three (3) years an innovative course is offered.
2. Third-Year Review
    a. At the conclusion of the third year, districts will submit a Renewal Cycle Summary that includes three (3) years of enrollment and program data. This Renewal Cycle Summary will serve as the renewal application for the next three years.
    b. OCR will review the submitted data and make one of the following determinations:
        i. Approve the course as a state-level approved course;
        ii. Discontinue the course; or
        iii. Allow the course to continue as an innovative course.
3. Continuation as an Innovative Course
    a. If OCR determines that the course should continue as an innovative course, it will be approved for an additional three (3) years.
    b. During this renewal period, districts are required to continue collecting enrollment and program data; however, annual renewal applications will not be required.
4. Subsequent Review Cycles
    a. At the end of each subsequent three-year renewal period, districts will submit a Renewal Cycle Summary that includes data from the full three years.
    b. OCR will again review the course and determine whether it should:
        i. Become a state-approved course;
        ii. Be discontinued; or
        iii. Continue as an innovative course for an additional three-year period.

Rationale for the Change

This revised renewal process is designed to:

- Bring CTE innovative course renewals into alignment with the three-year renewal cycle used for academic innovative courses;
- Reduce paperwork and administrative burden for districts;
- Provide greater flexibility in sustaining innovative courses and programs;
- Support continuation of courses that address regional or local workforce demand but may not be appropriate for statewide adoption; and
- Preserve OCR's ability to evaluate course quality, enrollment trends, and workforce alignment at defined review intervals.

Additional Guidance

The **January 30 application deadline** for CTE innovative course submissions will remain unchanged. The renewal application will be revised to reflect the new three-year renewal cycle described in this memorandum.

Districts with CTE innovative courses currently in **years three, four, or five** of the existing renewal cycle will transition into the revised process during the 2026–27 school year. These districts will **not complete additional annual renewal applications under the previous model**. Instead, they will enter the new cycle by completing the **Third-Year Review (Renewal Cycle Summary)** using the most recent three years of available data.

- Districts in **Year 3** will complete the Third-Year Review in January of the current school year as scheduled.
- Districts in **Year 4 or Year 5** will complete a **Third-Year Review (Renewal Cycle Summary)** in place of any remaining annual renewals, using their three most recent years of data.
- Upon approval, courses will move into a new **three-year continuation period** under the revised process.

This approach ensures a consistent transition to the updated renewal cycle while honoring the work districts have already completed under the previous system.

Submission procedures, including the method of submission, required course data, and required approvals, will remain the same as under the current process. Districts should continue to maintain accurate enrollment and program data for all Innovative Courses to support required reviews.

Further communication will be provided once the updated application materials are available.

Questions regarding this revised renewal process may be directed to Dr. Herb Bocchino at **hsbocchino@ed.sc.gov** or 803-734-2862.