SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: CTE Directors
District Superintendents
Accountability Administrators
High School Principals

FROM: Kayce Cook, EdD
Director, Office of Career Readiness

DATE: September 16, 2025

RE: South Carolina CTE Industry-Recognized Certifications for Students

The South Carolina Department of Education is pleased to share the **2025-26 South Carolina Tiered Certification List**. This list provides districts, career and technical education centers, counselors, and instructors with an updated reference tool for **approved industry-recognized certifications** and serves to support student career readiness, informs program and pathway planning, and ensures alignment with workforce demand and employer needs. Additionally, it outlines both the **new three-tiered certification system** and the **previous single-tier system**, depending on a student's cohort year.

The list includes:

- All certifications approved for accountability use, classified by **Tier 1 (Introductory), Tier 2 (Intermediate), and Tier 3 (Career Ready)**;
- Clear indicators for **Tier Designation** and **Career Ready status**, based on whether students fall under the new (9GR25, 9GR26) or previous (9GR23, 9GR24) system;
- A **guiding table of 2025–2026 Career Clusters and Programs**, which maps South Carolina's traditional 16 career clusters to the **newly modernized 14-cluster framework** adopted from national best practices; and
- Cluster-specific certification lists that include **aligned CIP-coded programs of study**, **hyperlinks** to associated certifications, and **navigation tools** to move between cluster sections and summary pages.

This list is a key tool for **district and career center leaders, school counselors, and CTE instructors** in making decisions around certification offerings, student advisement, and career-readiness reporting.

A link to the **2025-26 South Carolina Tiered Certification List** can be found on the South Carolina Department of Education's Career Readiness webpage **HERE**.

Submit a Certification for Review
South Carolina's Tiered Certification System ensures that approved industry certifications align with workforce demand, employer needs, and career advancement opportunities. School districts and career and technology centers may use the form below to recommend **new certifications** for inclusion on the Tiered Certification List.

Submissions are accepted **year-round** through this online application. All certifications must:

- Be aligned to a recognized **career pathway or industry sector**;
- Include **employer sponsorship** confirming relevance to employment and advancement;
- Meet **assessment standards** (e.g., nationally recognized, psychometrically valid, independently graded);
- Include optional endorsements from **postsecondary institutions** where applicable.

Each certification submitted is reviewed by the **SC Department of Education** and the **Department of Employment and Workforce** through a quarterly review process. Final tier placements are approved annually by the **Education Oversight Committee** and reflected in PowerSchool by **March 1** of each year.

The link to submit a certification review request form and upload supporting documentation can be found on the SCDE's Career Readiness webpage **HERE.**

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the Office of Career Readiness at **careerreadiness@ed.sc.gov**.