# **Program Approval Recommendations**

## **Changes to the program approval process are being proposed.**

The Program Approval Task Force representing various commissions and councils came together last spring, 2017 to develop recommendations for a more meaningful and accessible program approval process and inventory of programs. A summary of their recommendations are contained in this document.

## **This document contains**

* New features of the proposed approval process
* A summary of all recommendations
* Background on the Program Approval Task Force’s activities
* A timeline for approval and implementation

## **New features!**

* One application for all programs that can be customized.
* Electronic application with embedded features such as menus, calculations & textboxes.
* Program pathways are no longer narrative, but depicted as a graphic diagram.
* Certificates that are between 1 and 44 credits follow an expedited approval process.
* Inter-college communications are enhanced.
* Tools and resources for providing supply/demand and wage data will be available.
* Actual clinical and work-based placements will be identified as part of the approval process.
* The new program approval process guidelines will include a link to NWCCU’s required information for submitting a minor substantive change. Where possible, the program approval template sections will be designed to align with NWCCU required information to reduce duplicative work.

## **Recommendations Summary**

Detailed information about each recommendation can be found at [Program Approval Task Force](https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/professional-technical/default.aspx)

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| Factor | Current Process | Recommended Changes | Benefit | Programs |
| Inclusion of Programs | Academic Transfer, Prof/Tech, and I-Best programs all have different approval processes.  For programs to be eligible for Opportunity Grant recipients and some Work First students, additional applications must be completed. | Recommend development of one online application for all lower division certificates and degrees.  Create a comprehensive guidance manual that walks college staff through the process and provides examples. | One online application for all programs provides improved access and streamlines the process for college users. | All programs |
| Program Description | Program descriptions vary by the type of approval process.  The same information is not provided consistently | Recommend colleges include common descriptive elements like program title and credits.  Colleges will also include information pertaining to program goals, student outcomes, awards and instructional delivery modes. | Consistent descriptions will allow colleges and the SBCTC to better query the inventory and more readily respond to requests for information about various college programs. | All programs |
| Program Pathway | The structure of the program, including options, certificates, entry and exit points, and award types is provided in a free-flowing narrative. | Recommend a schematic or flow chart diagram be used to show the structure of the program and entire pathway for students including options beyond a 2-year degree if appropriate.  A template with instructions on how to build the diagram will be provided. Examples and links to technical assistance will be included in guidance. | A schematic diagram of a program pathway is clearer and simpler to follow than a narrative.  The same diagram could be used for advisory meetings and in college publications. | All programs |
| Factor | Current Process | Recommended Changes | Benefit | Programs |
| Expedited process for specific programs | Prof/Tech certificate programs of 1-19 credits do not require program approval. They must be registered.  Prof/Tech programs 20 credits or longer must go through the program approval process. | Recommend same process for certificates that are 1-19 credits – registration only.  Recommend certificates 20-44 credits follow an expedited approval process if -  The first two digits of the certificate CIP are the same as the first two digits of the primary program CIP   * College provides a program description and pathway diagram. * College provides documentation of need for the proposed prof/tech certificate. | Many short certificates are designed to meet employer needs to upskill incumbent workers in competitive markets. An expedited process allows colleges to ramp up needed training programs quickly.  New certificates with differing first two digits of the CIP from the primary program will be required to follow the full approval process.  Documentation of need may include, but is not limited to advisory committee meeting minutes, notes of conversations or emails from local employers, labor/market data, or notes from meetings with economic and/or workforce development organizations. | Prof/Tech |
| Program Credits | Total number of credits are listed on approval form | Recommend colleges add additional information if certificates or degrees exceed a specific credit threshold.  Certificates over 40 or 75 credits and Associate degrees over 105 credits will require rationale. | Program cost and length for students have been considered.  Rational for creating less than a 1 yr. cert. (for certs 40-44 credits) or an Associate’s degree (for certs. 75-89 credits) is documented  Rationale for 2-yr.degree programs that exceed a range of 90-105 credits is documented. | All Programs |
| Factor | Current Process | Recommended Changes | Benefit | Programs |
| Inter-College Communication | Academic Transfer Prog.  The college requesting program approval must secure signatures from the Chief Instructional Officers at neighboring colleges.  Prof/Tech Prog.  Upon receipt of a program approval request, the State Board forwards notification to CTCs via email. | Recommend colleges be encouraged (not required) to submit plans to develop a new program or add an option to an existing program using a new program matrix.  Academic Transfer still requires CIO signatures.  Prof/Tech still requires notification to CTCs. | A matrix will provide more timely notice to colleges.  Supports a collaborative system approach to serving students and communities.    Will hopefully minimize disputes later in the approval process. | All Programs |
| Supply/Demand Data | Supply and labor market demand information is required. However, there is no guidance on what type of data is required or tools/resources for providing evidence of need. | Recommend following established Applied Baccalaureate program criteria for supply and demand data.  Guidelines will add links to free tools and contact information for regional Employment Security Dept. economists. | The BAS supply/demand criteria is well-vetted and stipulates the kinds of evidence required for specific circumstances (established occupations vs. emerging occupations). | Prof/Tech  I-BEST |
| Wage Information | Wage data is required, but little guidance is provided. | Recommend colleges identify wages for the occupation(s) and area the data represents (county, region, state).  Narrative is required if wage information is not available (emerging occupation).  A link to the state’s Employment Security Dept. data will be embedded in the form. | Helps inform students about potential wages as they select a college program.  Provides required wage information for prof/tech programs on college web sites  Is required to meet Opportunity Grant and some WorkFirst eligibility criteria. | Prof/Tech  I-BEST |
| Factor | Current Process | Recommended Changes | Benefit | Programs |
| Clinical and Work-based Learning Placements | If applicable, an initial assessment of opportunities for work-based learning/clinical sites must be documented. | Recommend the following:  If applicable, the college must state if the clinical or work-based placements are   1. Required by an accrediting or certifying body. 2. Required by the college. 3. Optional for students.   If required, the college must provide the number of annual placements needed and provide letters of commitment from all employers/organizations providing placements. | Concerns about placements are addressed at the beginning of the approval process.  May reduce objections by nearby colleges offering similar programs that also require student placements. | Prof/Tech |

## **Background**

A twelve-member Program Approval Task Force was formed last March 2017, to create a more meaningful, consistent and accessible program approval process and inventory of programs. Guiding principles and goals were developed and agreed upon by the Task Force members. The members also identified the purposes of program approval for Washington’s CTC system. These documents can be found at [Program Approval Task Force](https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/professional-technical/default.aspx)

A fully online application and program inventory are envisioned, creating access to information about college programs and actionable data that supports program development, assessment and research at the college and State Board level. Not all parts of the application process will be required for all program types. Depending on the program, college staff will be required to fill out only portions of the electronic approval form. Use of drop-down menus, pre-programed schematics and calculations, and text boxes will be used to streamline the process. A guidance manual, examples and a glossary of terms will also be developed for college staff. Links to NWCCU information concerning substantive change requirements will also be included.

## **Task force members:**

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## **Timeline**

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| Nov. – Dec. 2017 | Task force will meet to discuss and incorporate feedback from fall meetings. |
| Jan. 2018 | Task force will solicit final feedback from commission & council members. |
| Feb. 2018 | Input will be analyzed and recommendations revised. |
| Mar. 2018 | Instruction Commission will discuss revised recommendations. |
| Spr. Qtr. 2018 | Instruction Commission will consider adoption of the recommendations. |
| Win. – Sum. 2018 | Implementation task force will design the program approval application. |
| Sum. – Win 2018-19 | If approved by IC, online application will go into development & testing. |
| Spring 2019 | Online application and program inventory will be fully implemented. |