**What is Regional Consultation?**

Regional consultation is a process where districts benefit from the expertise and perspectives of stakeholders. While school districts may already have an idea of what Chapter 74 program(s) they wish to open, districts should make informed decisions by engaging with stakeholders to discuss questions like (but not limited to):

* Is there adequate labor market demand for this program?
* Are there other preparatory programs serving the same population?
* Is this the right program for this school and the students?
* Are there enough potential students and interest to pursue this program?

**Which Stakeholders should we engage with and why?**

As examples:

* MassHire knows about *regional* labor market demand, including changes in the total number of workers needed (are jobs increasing or shrinking for this occupation?) and in the number of replacement openings to fill vacancies caused by worker departures. The [Regional Blueprints](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint) should be a primary reference point and driver for consultation and planning.
* Local Businesses can speak directly to potential for graduates to find local entry level employment.
* Advisory Committees, which include representation by business and industry, can provide sound labor market information.
* Schools your district has a relationship/partnership with.
* For academic regional and technical regional districts, your member towns whose students you serve can provide input based on their community needs and their student interest.
* Schools in your workforce region that operate the same program, within **approximately** 5 miles if east of Route 495, 10 miles if west of 495 or to the east border of Berkshire County, and **approximately** 20 miles if in Berkshire County. These schools can speak to labor market, student demand, and positive placement. They can also share experiences in placing students in Cooperative Education and other work-based learning opportunities.
* Students can share interest and questions. Please do not overlook the valuable perspective of students.

**Is Regional Consultation regulatory (part of the CTE Regulations 603 CMR 4.00)?**

The phrase is not in the regulations, but regional consultation supports districts in their effort to demonstrate labor market and student demand, which are requirements written into the Regulations.

4.04: Program Approval Procedures and Policies

(1) In order to receive vocational technical education program approval, the Superintendent shall or submit an application to the Commissioner that provides clear evidence of secondary student and labor market demand for the program and demonstrates compliance with the approval criteria.

**Does an applicant that is a member of a Regional Vocational Technical School District (RVTSD) need permission from the RVTSD?**

The CTE Regulations state: A town that belongs to a regional vocational district may not offer an approved vocational technical program in its municipal high school if that program is offered in the regional district, unless the Commissioner approves an exception. Thus, an exception must be requested for projects which include programs that are duplicative of programs offered in a school district's member regional vocational technical school. In making the determination, the Commissioner will consider the district's statement of need and in addition, will seek comment on the district's request for an exception from the regional vocational school district school committee. [4.04(7)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr4.html?section=04)

When a district submits an Intent to Apply, OCCTE ascertains what, if any, programs would be duplicative of a program offered at a RVTHS where the applicant is a member.

Where DESE once used a signature page to be signed by the superintendent of a RVTHS, OCCTE will initiate conversations to understand what communications have taken place.

When necessary, CCTE will convene meetings with the involved districts. The Commissioner takes this into consideration when deciding if the application will proceed to the Concluding (Part B) Application.

**Do Regional Vocational Technical School Districts need to consult with their member towns as part of the Preliminary (Part A) application?**

RVTSDs should have discussions with member towns to share the planned direction, to take questions, and to listen to feedback. Most RVTSDs use their school committee to communicate to member towns. RVTSDs might consider expanding their communications to the superintendents.

**Will opposition from MassHire or another district result in not being invited to complete a Concluding (Part B) application?**

If there is opposition to a program application, OCCTE will seek additional information to fully understand all perspectives. This information will be shared with the Commissioner when providing recommendations to proceed to Part B.

**What do we need to submit in the Preliminary Application (Part A)?**

* Your submission should include a summary of the consultation.
* **You do not have to submit** participants’signatures or letters of support**.**
* The Part A Reviewer may ask clarifying questions and may convene a meeting to discuss further.

**What if we already have an MSBA project that includes the program(s)? Do we still need the regional consultation?**

The applicant would still need to provide us with a summary or documentation of regional consultation. Since the MSBA application process includes labor market demand, the applicant can share that as part of the summary. In addition, it is important to have open communications between districts when considering opening new programs or closing existing programs. The applicant district can always benefit from stakeholder input, and early connections can develop and maintain positive relationships between districts.