



Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

**Evaluation Report
August 2026**



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From the director

August 2026

Members
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
Idaho Legislature

Career technical education programs are in nearly every one of Idaho's school districts and had nearly 152,000 enrollments in the 2025-26 school year, giving students skills ranging from cosmetology to cybersecurity. These programs aim to broaden which opportunities Idaho's students are ready for at graduation while teaching practical skills that Idaho's employers need.

Our education evaluations keep finding variations on a theme: schools across Idaho have drastically different resources, communities, and constraints but the state does little to account for these differences. Schools in North Idaho have to compete with Washington schools for classified staff, the smallest districts lack a tax base that can afford a new school building, and a school with 25 percent of their students in special education receive nearly the same state money per student as a school with less than 5 percent.

Career technical education follows this same pattern, leaving Idaho's small and rural districts with few opportunities, particularly in high-demand areas like nursing, trades, and engineering. Idaho's smallest 55 districts have only 4 Health Professions and Public Safety programs between them: programs that could lead to careers dispatching for the local 911 center, providing emergency medical services, or offering in-home care to the disabled or elderly: careers at the center of three of our recent reports highlighting unmet needs in Idaho's communities.

What can the Legislature do? The report presents options to modify funding and credentialing: the Legislature could expand the uses of dedicated funds to salary, so schools that need equipment can keep spending on equipment, while those that need teachers have flexibility. The Legislature could account for smaller CTE class sizes in the funding formula, reform the Occupational Specialist credential to vary more by occupation, or target support to programs competing with six-figure industry salaries instead of those where teacher salaries are already competitive. These options are not solutions; they are choices with real tradeoffs.

Sincerely,

Ryan Langrill, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations



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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Why we were asked to do this evaluation

In March 2025, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee approved a study of career technical education (CTE) in Idaho. The request described difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified career technical educators. Many technical educators leave higher-paying private-sector careers to teach, which limits the pool of available professionals and the scope of CTE programs schools can offer.

The report is organized around three questions: how CTE is funded and whether that funding can support salaries, how Idaho's CTE teachers are compensated and why districts struggle to hire them, and what policy options exist to address these concerns. We reviewed three years (2024–2026) of teacher pay and credential records from the Idaho State Board of Education, CTE funding and enrollment data from the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE), private-sector wage data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and conducted two surveys of local education agency (LEA) CTE contacts.

What we found

Idaho's CTE programs face three kinds of pressure: funding that cannot reach a teacher's base paycheck, program access that is limited outside the state's largest districts, and teacher salaries that lag behind industry wages in highly technical fields.

The most widely available dedicated CTE funds cannot be used for teacher salaries.

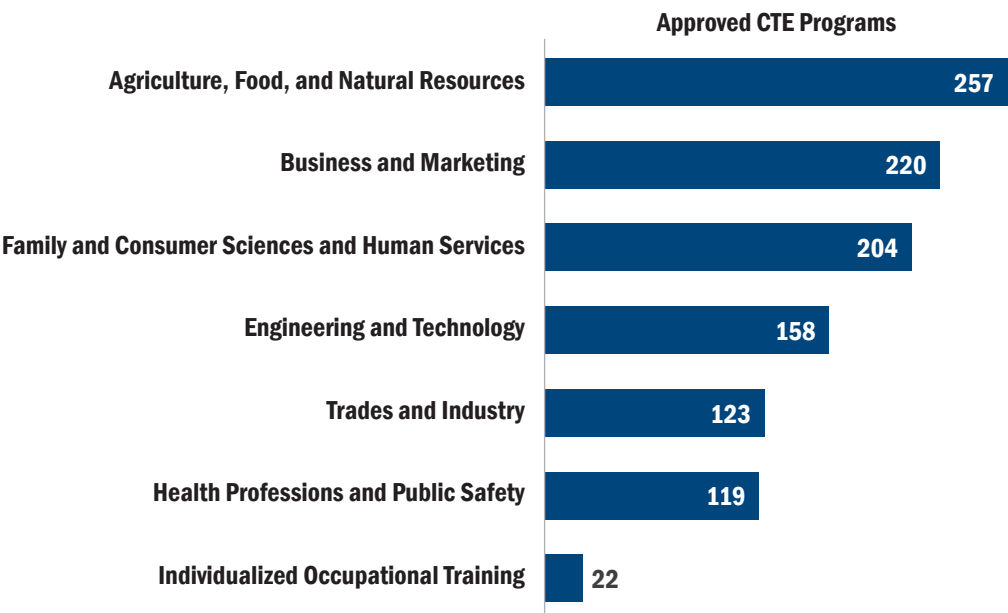
There were six funding streams distributed by IDCTE dedicated to support CTE programs in fiscal year 2025, totaling \$25 million. Program Added Cost Funds, which are distributed to LEAs that offer a CTE program and made up \$14 million of the total, cannot be used on a CTE teacher's regular salary. This is out of step with neighboring states, where dedicated CTE funding is often explicitly permitted to be used to support CTE teacher salaries.

Two of the three most needed CTE program areas are the most likely not to be available due to staffing or funding constraints.

In the 2026 school year, Idaho LEAs offered 1,103 approved CTE programs with roughly 151,500 student enrollments. CTE offerings are split into six different program areas, with Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources being the largest CTE program area in the state (exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources is the largest CTE program area statewide.



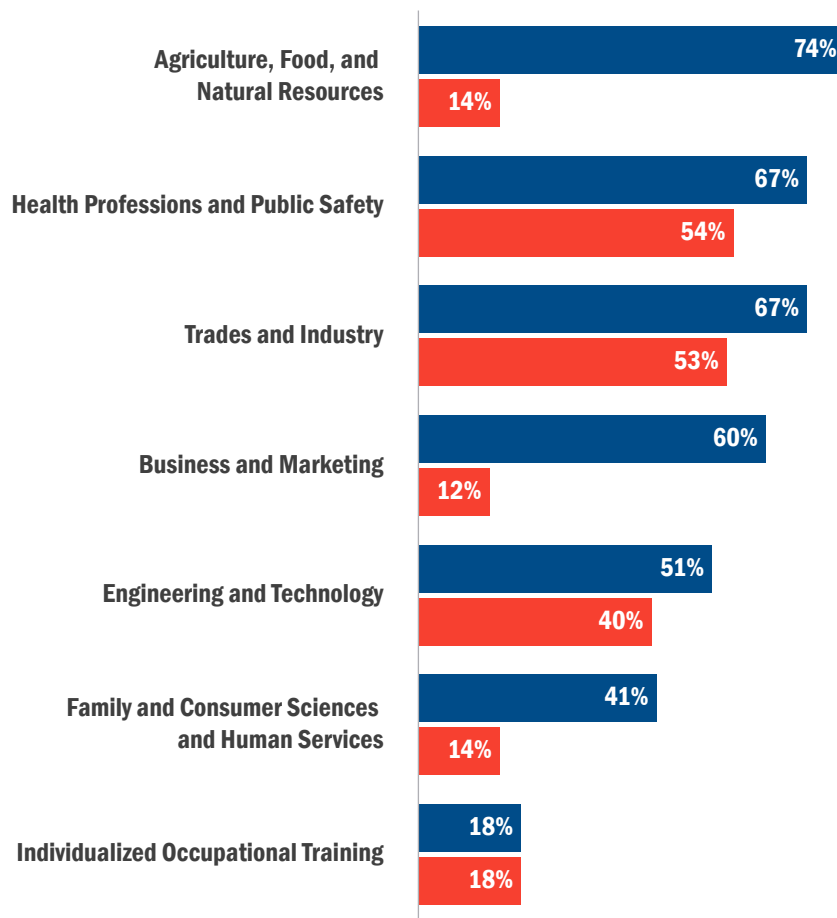
Note: Individualized Occupational Training is shown for completeness but functions as a placement mechanism, not a defined instructional program area. Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource programs are both the most needed and most available. Health Professions and Public Safety and Trades and Industry programs were also reported as necessary but are much less widespread. Over half of survey respondents reported that they could not offer those programs due to staffing and funding constraints (exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources was the program area with the highest need for students and local workforce but one of the easiest to offer.

Program areas cited as “**most needed**” and “**unable to offer due to staffing or funding constraints**”



Note: Individualized Occupational Training is shown for completeness but functions as a placement mechanism, not a defined instructional program area. Source: OPE Program Funding and Demand survey (n=85; n=57 unable to offer question).

We found that LEA characteristics can influence a student’s access to CTE programming. Region 3 (Southwest Idaho), City settings, and the state’s largest districts each account for the largest share and the most variety in CTE program

offerings. Smaller and more remote districts had more Agriculture CTE programs and fewer highly technical CTE programs. For example, none of the smallest districts had programs in Health Professions and Public Safety.

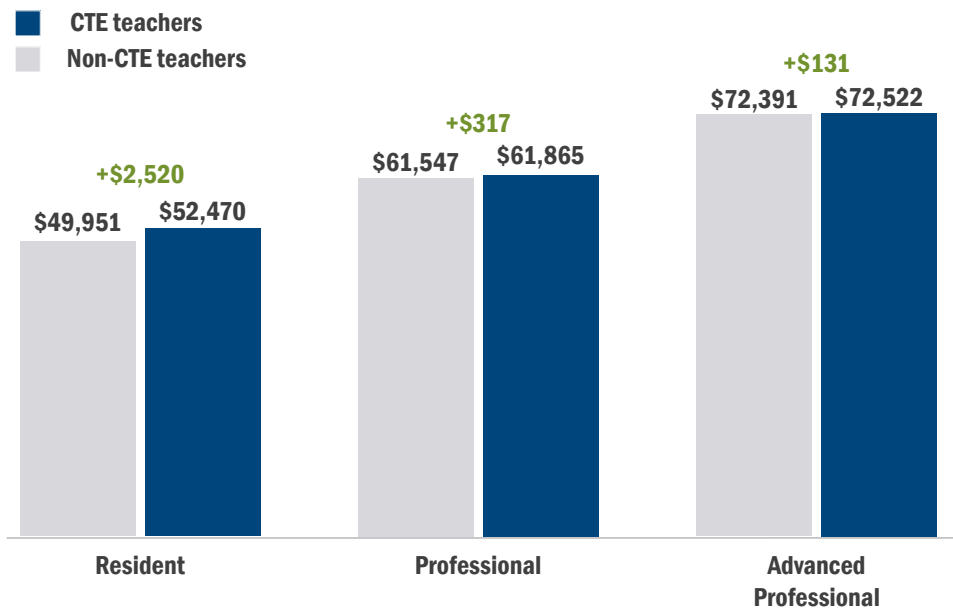
CTE and non-CTE secondary teachers earn similar annual salaries, except at the entry level and in highly technical program areas.

Across the 2024–2026 school years, CTE teachers were paid on average \$467 more than non-CTE teachers statewide. That comparison hides differences when considering the career ladder placement of a teacher. Newly hired CTE teachers on the Resident rung average about \$52,500 versus nearly \$50,000 for non-CTE teachers, a \$2,500 (5 percent) advantage that reflects how the teacher career ladder incorporates industry experience (exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

CTE teacher salary is most different from non-CTE teachers on the Resident rung of the teacher career ladder.

Mean salary by career-ladder rung, CTE vs. non-CTE (all years)

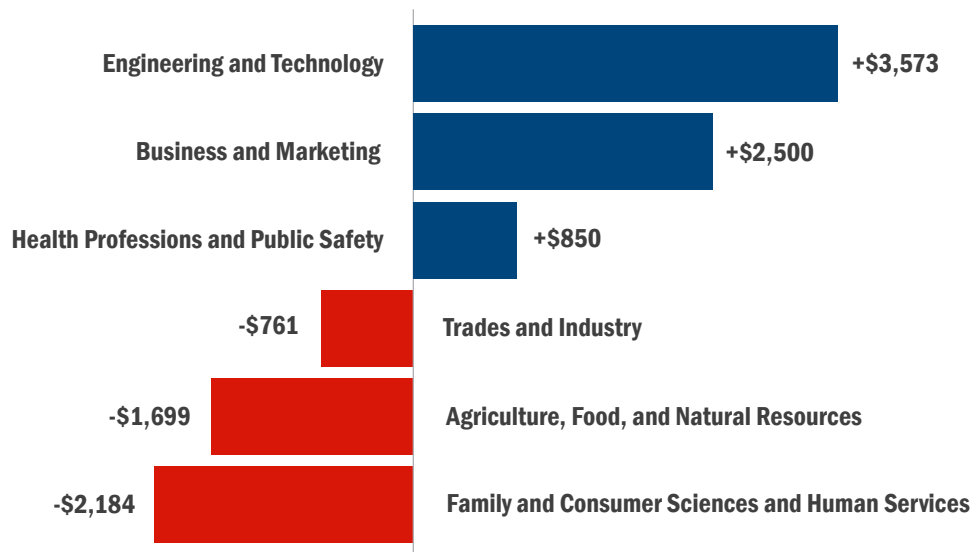


Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

Pay disparity with non-CTE teachers is also influenced by the program areas of CTE teachers. Teachers from three program areas, Engineering and Technology, Business and Marketing Education, and Health Professions and Public Safety, were consistently paid more than their non-CTE counterparts (exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4

Teachers from three CTE program areas have an average pay higher than non-CTE teachers.



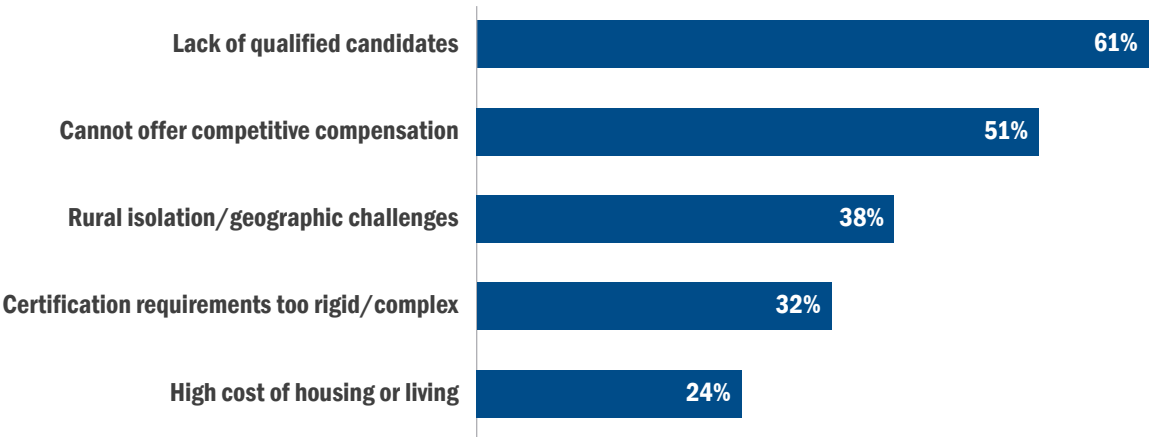
Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

CTE professionals found recruiting CTE teachers to be difficult, citing competitiveness with industry wages as a barrier.

About 66 percent of survey respondents found recruiting CTE instructors somewhat or very difficult over the past five years; only 7 percent found it easy. Respondents cited too few qualified candidates and an inability to compete on pay as the two leading barriers (exhibit 5). Health Professions and Public Safety was the program area most frequently cited as difficult to staff.

Exhibit 5

Lack of qualified candidates was the most frequently cited barrier for recruiting CTE instructors.



Source: Teacher Recruitment & Retention survey (n=117).

Nearly 60 percent of respondents to our survey rated CTE instructor pay as not competitive with local industry wages; only about seven percent rated it competitive or better. We found that competitiveness with industry wages greatly depended on CTE program area, with teacher salaries in Engineering and Technology and Health Professions and Public Safety being the least competitive with industry pay.

Policy options address different parts of the same issues and several are more effective in combination than alone.

Survey respondents ranked higher base pay for CTE instructors, funded through the state foundation formula, as both the most broadly supported and single most impactful change. The options below correspond to the funding, credentialing, and compensation problems documented in this report (exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6

Policy options for funding, credentialing, and compensation problems.

Policy option	What it would do	Key trade-off / precedent
Allow Program Added Cost Funds to be used for base salary.	Let Program Added Cost Funds pay part of a CTE teacher's base salary.	Competes with equipment costs absent new appropriation. Used by NV, OR, UT, WA.
Adjust Public School Support Program for CTE class size.	Fund CTE's smaller class sizes directly in the foundation formula.	Could shift funding away from districts with few or no CTE programs.
Reform the Occupational Specialist credential route.	Attach fixed, quantified requirements to each endorsement, or allow hiring before certification.	Narrows local discretion (UT model) or adds oversight burden (WA model).
Target pay by program area or credential.	Direct raises to the credentials and program areas with the widest private-sector wage gaps.	Creates pay differences within the CTE teaching corps.
Regional staffing arrangements.	Extend high-cost program areas, such as Health Professions, to small districts through shared delivery.	Does not eliminate the need for a qualified teacher willing to take the position.

1

Introduction

Legislative interest

In March 2025, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee approved a study to look at secondary career technical education (CTE) in Idaho. The study request described difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified career technical educators. Many technical educators must leave higher-paying private-sector careers to teach, limiting the pool of available professionals and the scope of CTE programs schools can offer. Since CTE programs are designed for smaller “work experience” cohorts, these programs are often the first to be removed when districts reduce staffing to balance budgets.

The request asked OPE to study options to create additional funding flexibility, increase compensation for CTE staff, and match funding to workforce development needs. This report is organized by three main questions: how CTE is funded and whether that funding can support salaries, how Idaho’s CTE teachers are compensated and why districts struggle to hire them, and what policy options exist to address these concerns.

Evaluation approach

This study relies on data from four main sources: teacher pay and credential records from the Idaho State Board of Education, funding and CTE enrollment data from the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE), national wage data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and two surveys conducted by OPE.

Teacher salary and credential data: We used three years (2024–2026 school years) of Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) certified-staff records to build a teacher- and course-level dataset of secondary CTE and non-CTE salaries, career-ladder placement, full-time equivalent (FTE), and credential type. We matched each teacher’s course assignments to the IDCTE Assignment Credential Manual to identify CTE program area.

CTE funding data: We obtained IDCTE distribution data for CTE programs to determine how CTE funding is distributed and whether current funding mechanisms can be used to support teacher salaries. We compared Idaho's CTE funding formula and permitted uses of funds against those of six neighboring western states.

Private-sector wage data: We used the May 2025 Idaho estimates from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program to benchmark CTE teacher pay against the median and 75th percentile wages of the industry occupations that each CTE program area and course trains toward.

Stakeholder surveys: We conducted a teacher recruitment and retention survey of LEA CTE contacts addressing recruiting difficulty, turnover, and compensation competitiveness, and a second survey looking at CTE programming and funding.

In this report, we grouped local education agencies (LEAs) using three different approaches:

Setting: We classify City, Town, Rural, and Remote districts, using definitions provided by ISDE combined with US Census Bureau locale definitions. Independent career technical centers and charter schools are defined as their own subset setting.

Support Groups: We categorized LEAs into four groups based on the divisor used to calculate support units for state funding, which are determined by district size. Group 1 are the districts with the largest student enrollments and Group 4 are the districts with the smallest student enrollments. The support group label does not include career technical centers nor charter schools.

Geographic Region: We divide the state into six education regions, from Northern Idaho (Region 1) to Eastern Idaho (Region 6), using the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) geographic classifications (exhibit 7).

More information on project methodology can be found in appendix C.

Exhibit 7

There are six education regions in the state.



Secondary Career Technical Education Background

Career technical education combines academic instruction with hands-on, occupationally focused training to prepare students for skilled employment, postsecondary technical study, or industry credentials directly after high school. The Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE), operating under the State Board of Education, approves secondary CTE programs and administers the state and federal funding that supports them. Programs are delivered through three kinds of local education agencies (LEAs): traditional school districts, public charter schools, and career technical centers that can serve students from multiple neighboring districts.

Local education agencies (LEAs)

LEAs are public boards of education or other public authorities that provide administrative control and oversight to primary and secondary public schools. In Idaho, each school district and state-authorized charter school is an individual LEA. When we refer to LEAs in this report we are referring to school districts, charter schools, and independent career technical centers. Charter schools authorized by a district are part of that district's LEA, though they will be considered a separate LEA for this report.

In the 2026 school year there were 125 LEAs that offered CTE courses, including 107 of Idaho's 115 school districts, 13 charter schools, and 5 career technical centers.¹

Idaho organizes secondary CTE into six career program areas. Each program area groups related occupations and the pathways that train toward them:

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources — pathways include agricultural science, mechanics and power systems, animal and plant science, agribusiness, horticulture, and natural resource management

1. There are 14 career technical centers in Idaho. Five centers operate as their own LEA and nine centers are operated by school districts. In this report when we refer to career technical centers we are only addressing the five standalone centers.



Business and Marketing Education — pathways include accounting, business management, administrative services, marketing, and business technology

Engineering and Technology Education — pathways include pre-engineering and design, programming and software development, cybersecurity, and related technical fields

Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services — pathways include early-childhood education, culinary and hospitality, human services, and family studies

Health Professions and Public Safety — pathways include nursing assisting, medical assisting, emergency medical services, and law enforcement and public safety pathways

Trades and Industry — pathways include the construction and skilled trades (electrical, plumbing, HVAC, welding, automotive, machining), manufacturing, and transportation

In addition to the six distinct CTE program areas, LEAs may offer additional CTE courses through Individualized Occupational Training (IOT), which allows students to participate in CTE courses outside of the pathways offered in their LEA.

2

CTE Program Offerings

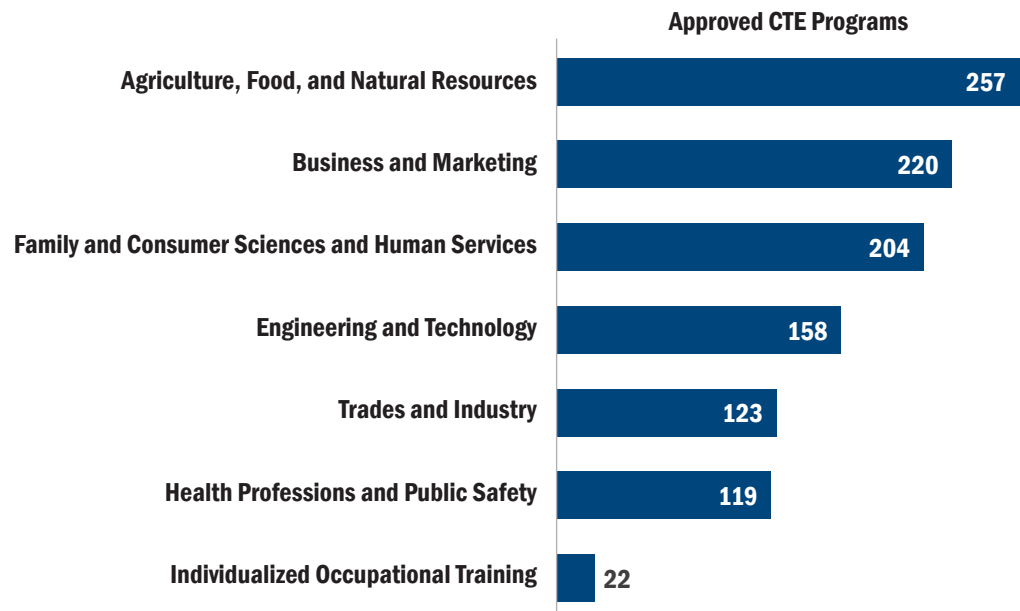
CTE program offerings are concentrated in a small number of program areas and in Idaho's most populous districts. Local education agency (LEA) setting, region, and district size shape which CTE programs students can access. We found that CTE program diversity is greatest at LEAs in Region 3 of the state (Southwest Idaho), City settings, and larger districts. Smaller and more rural LEAs have more Agriculture CTE programs with little to no access to Health Professions and Public Safety programs. The program areas most needed by students and the local workforce, particularly health professions and skilled trades, are frequently the same program areas LEAs report they cannot staff or fund.

In the 2026 school year, there were 1,103 approved CTE programs statewide, with around 151,500 student enrollments.² As shown in exhibit 8, program offerings are concentrated in three program areas: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources have the largest number of approved programs, followed by Business and Marketing Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services. Health Professions and Public Safety, one of the highest demand and hardest to staff program areas, discussed later in this chapter, has the fewest approved programs. The remaining programs are Individualized Occupational Training placements, which allow students to pursue CTE coursework outside their own LEA's program offerings.

2. Enrollment counts are not on a per-student basis, but rather the total enrollments in approved CTE courses and individual students are counted multiple times for each CTE course enrollment.

Exhibit 8

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources is the largest CTE program area statewide.



Note: Individualized Occupational Training is shown for completeness but functions as a placement mechanism, not a defined instructional program area. Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.



Region, setting, and district size each shape which CTE programs a student can access, and Health Professions and Public Safety is the least available program area across all three.

The three groupings of LEAs in this report, by education region, by setting, and by district size (support group), describe overlapping populations rather than three separate stories. Idaho's smallest and most rural districts are in Regions 1 and 2 and in the smaller support groups, while its largest and most urban districts are in Region 3, City settings, and Group 1. Across all three groupings, CTE access is concentrated in the same places. Region 3 accounts for about 40 percent of approved CTE programs and CTE course enrollment statewide. The largest districts (Group 1) offer roughly 680 approved CTE programs compared to roughly 60 programs in the smallest districts (Group 4). City districts, 15 of the state's 125 reporting LEAs, house 40 percent of the state's approved CTE programs. More information on CTE program offerings by region, setting, and district size can be found in appendix D.

The largest districts offer roughly 680 approved CTE programs compared to roughly 60 programs in the smallest districts.

The decline in overall program count is less concerning than the narrower program offerings that comes with it. Town, Rural, and Remote districts offer proportionately more Agriculture programming than any other program area. For the smallest districts in the state this narrowing becomes concentration: Agriculture and Business and Marketing account for nearly 80 percent of Group 4's approved CTE programs compared to 37 percent in Group 1. Smaller and more rural LEAs are not offering a smaller version of the same CTE programs found in larger districts and urban areas. They are offering a narrower set of options concentrated in the program areas that require the least specialized facilities and equipment.

Health Professions and Public Safety shows the sharpest narrowing of options of any program area in all LEA groupings. By district size, Health Professions offerings fall from 82 programs in Group 1, to 12 in Group 2, 4 in Group 3, and none in Group 4. Only 15 of the state's 119 Health Professions programs are in Rural or Remote LEAs. Region 1 and Region 2 only have a handful of Health

Profession programs, five and six respectively, the fewest of any of the education regions in the state. Career Technical Centers are the exception. Despite their small number, they offer a higher share of Health Professions and Trades and Industry programming. This suggests that pooling CTE delivery across a region, not district size alone, is what allows a program area like Health Professions to be sustained.

This pattern with Health Professions is not unique to program counts. Chapter 4's teacher credential data reaches the same conclusion independently: Group 4 districts employed only two Health Professions teachers statewide across the three school years covered by this report.



The program areas Idaho's students and workforce need most are frequently the ones LEAs cannot staff or fund.

The Idaho Division of Career Technical Education's FY25 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) synthesis, drawn from all six education regions, reinforces the statewide findings of this report. The assessment concludes that Idaho's local CTE systems are strongly aligned to in-demand industries but constrained by capacity. Two of the highest statewide needs identified were: (1) facilities, equipment, and consumables to keep pathways at industry standard, and (2) recruitment, retention, and credentialing of qualified CTE educators.

All six regions independently named the same recruitment drivers: competition with industry wages, limited credentialed applicant pools, and credentialing barriers for industry professionals. Rural regions additionally cited geographic isolation, housing affordability, substitute shortages, and limited release time for professional development. The CLNA finds that these staffing constraints not only leave positions unfilled, they reduce class availability, slow curriculum modernization, limit dual credit delivery, and restrict work-based learning coordination.

Our survey of LEA CTE contacts reaches the same conclusion. The survey asked not only what LEAs need, but also what CTE programs they would offer if they could, what stops them, and which specific pathways are most affected.

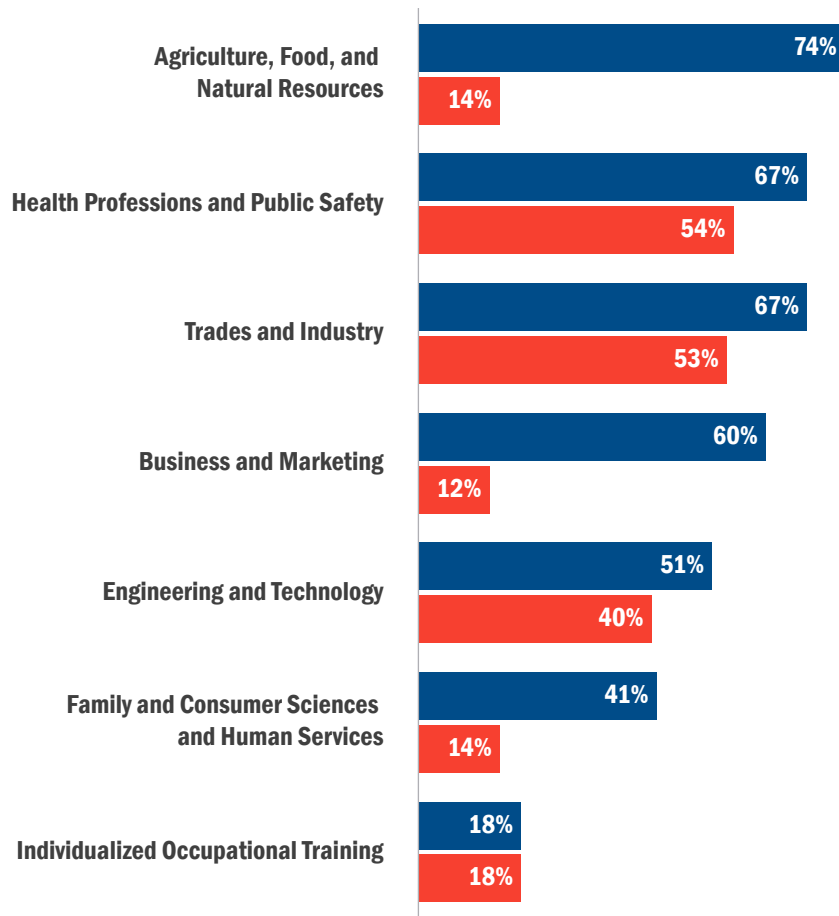
Respondents identified Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources as the program area most needed by students and the local workforce, followed by Health Professions and Public Safety and Trades and Industry (exhibit 9). Sixty-eight percent of respondents said they want to offer a CTE program or pathway they currently cannot, showing that unmet demand is common among Idaho's LEAs.

68%
of survey
respondents
said they want
to offer a
CTE program
or pathway
they currently
cannot.

Exhibit 9

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources was the program area with the highest need for students and local workforce but one of the easiest to offer.

Program areas cited as “**most needed**” and “**unable to offer due to staffing or funding constraints**”



Note: Individualized Occupational Training is shown for completeness but functions as a placement mechanism, not a defined instructional program area. Source: OPE Program Funding and Demand survey (n=85; n=57 unable to offer question).

Comparing the program areas identified as most needed against the program areas LEAs say they would offer but cannot, separates the needs that are already being met from the ones that are not. Agriculture is the clearest example of a need already met. It is the single most cited need (74 percent) but the least cited as having barriers to offering the program (14 percent). This is consistent with Agriculture already being Idaho’s largest CTE program area by total count of

offerings. Business and Marketing and Family and Consumer Sciences show the same pattern, substantial stated need (60 percent and 41 percent) with a comparatively small number of LEAs unable to offer them (12 percent and 14 percent).

Health Professions and Public Safety, Trades and Industry, and Engineering and Technology show the opposite pattern. Health Professions ranks among the top needs (67 percent) and is also the single most cited program area LEAs cannot offer due to staffing or funding (54 percent). Trades and Industry follows the same pattern (67 percent need, 53 percent unable to offer), and Engineering and Technology, a somewhat less cited need (51 percent), is still the second most cited area as unable to be offered (40 percent).

The specific career pathways LEAs most often said they would offer but cannot are concentrated in three program areas: Health Professions and Public Safety, Trades and Industry, and Engineering and Technology. Nursing Assistant is the single most cited unmet pathway (21 percent of respondents), followed by Electrical and Plumbing (20 percent each), HVAC (19 percent), and Medical Assisting and Emergency Medical Technician (18 percent each) (exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10

The career pathways LEAs want to offer but cannot concentrate in Health Professions and Public Safety, Trades and Industry, and Engineering and Technology Program Areas.

Career Pathway	Program Area	% of respondents
Nursing Assistant	Health Professions and Public Safety	21%
Electrical	Trades and Industry	20%
Plumbing	Trades and Industry	20%
HVAC	Trades and Industry	19%
Medical Assisting	Health Professions and Public Safety	18%
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	Health Professions and Public Safety	18%
Construction Trades	Trades and Industry	15%
Cybersecurity	Engineering and Technology	12%
Programming & Software Development	Engineering and Technology	11%
Automotive Collision Repair	Trades and Industry	11%

Source: OPE Program Funding and Demand survey (n=85).

3

CTE State Funding

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) receive base funding through the Public School Support Program under Idaho Code Title 33, Chapter 10. This program provides salary-based apportionment for staff, support unit funding for general instructional operations, and discretionary funding. The State Department of Education distributes most of these funds based on support units that are based on the average daily attendance of an LEA.

To help CTE programs directly, the state offers several different funds that are distributed by the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE). These funds are a separate, supplemental layer in addition to Public School Support Program funding. We found that while dedicated CTE funding exists, LEAs still reported funding constraints, and the uses of state CTE funding are more restrictive in Idaho than neighboring states.



Program Added Cost Funds are the most widely available CTE specific funding for LEAs.

CTE funding from IDCTE is designed to cover the added cost of delivering specialized, industry-aligned programs, which are costs beyond what the general funding formula provides. The “added cost” concept means these funds pay for the cost of CTE above normal secondary education costs. IDCTE distributed six CTE-specific state funds and one federal distribution to LEAs from the 2024 through 2026 school years:

Program Added Cost Funds (PACF) – distributed to LEAs based on the full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher count of CTE programs approved by IDCTE.

Career Technical Center Added Cost Funds (CTC ACF) – distributed to the 14 career technical centers in Idaho based on the number of students at the center who are enrolled in a capstone course, the number of students who completed a technical skills assessment, and the total earned credit hours reported.

Program Quality Initiative (PQI) Grants – distributed by IDCTE to LEAs based on application or performance. The funds can be used to reward high-performing pathways (Incentive Awards), help equip new CTE programs (Establishment Grants), or help with lower performing programs (Technical Assistance Grants). The funds can be used for all CTE program areas besides Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, which is only eligible for the Technical Assistance Grants. Career technical centers are not eligible for PQI funds.

Idaho Quality Program Standards (IQPS) Grants – distributed by IDCTE specifically for Agriculture and Natural Resources programs. Can be used for high-performing programs or to assist with newly created programs. Career technical centers are not eligible for IQPS funds.

Workforce Readiness Initiative (WRI) – distributed to LEAs based on their number of CTE concentrators, students who have completed multiple courses within a CTE pathway and have demonstrated workforce readiness at the completion of the CTE program. Career technical centers are not eligible for WRI funds.

Leading Idaho Grant 2.0 – a two-year grant to assist LEAs with programs in the top 250 occupations within Idaho with either

more than 100 job openings or greater than 25 percent projected future growth. The grant was discontinued after the 2024 school year.

Perkins V Federal Funding – appropriated by the federal government to assist states with secondary and postsecondary CTE programs. Secondary distribution relies on the number of students in an LEA and the number of students from families below the poverty line. Funding must be at least \$15,000 per LEA, though LEAs can form a regional consortium to meet the threshold.

The uses and purposes for the seven CTE funding streams vary, though all funding sources may be used on equipment (exhibit 11). All CTE funding streams are subject to the supplement-not-supplant requirement. They may not replace expenditures that would otherwise be made with state funds.

Exhibit 11

All CTE funding sources can be used for equipment, while salary is more restrictive.

Use	PACF	CTC ACF	Perkins V	PQI	IQPS	WRI	Leading Idaho 2.0
Equipment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consumable Supplies	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—
Professional Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—
Curriculum/Materials	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—
Certifications/Assessments	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—
Work-based learning	—	—	✓	✓	—	—	—
Career Guidance	✓	—	✓	—	—	—	—
Salaries	Limited*	✓	✓	—	—	✓	—
Facility Improvements	—	✓	—	—	—	—	✓
Admin/Indirect Costs	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—

Note: *PACF may pay for extended contracts, career and technical student organization advisor travel, and health professions clinical supervision but not base salary. **Source:** IDCTE, CTE Secondary Funding: Allowable Uses, Funding Streams, and Per-LEA Distribution (May 2026).

In every year essentially all LEAs received PACF while the other funding streams reached fewer LEAs (exhibit 12). Roughly half of LEAs received Perkins V federal funding. The quality- and equipment-focused grants that require application by the LEA (PQI, IQPS, WRI) and the CTC ACF reached fewer LEAs.¹ The total number of LEAs that received funding rose slightly between 2024 and 2026, from about 123 to 126.

Exhibit 12

Program Added Cost Funds (PACF) is the most widely available CTE funding source.

Funding stream	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026*
PACF	123	122	124
Perkins V	51	59	60
PQI	33	34	44
WRI	25	28	—
Leading Idaho 2.0	41	—	—
IQPS	18	22	19
CTC ACF	14	14	14
Total funding LEAs	123	124	126

Note: *FY 2026 counts as of the April 2026 partial-year data; final Perkins counts will be higher. Leading Idaho 2.0 was not distributed in FY 2026 and WRI is not distributed until May 31, after financial data was received for this report. **Source:** IDCTE, CTE Secondary Funding: Allowable Uses, Funding Streams, and Per-LEA Distribution (May 2026).

Total distributions to LEAs were \$33.3 million in FY 2024, \$25.1 million in FY 2025, and \$24.6 million through April in FY 2026 (a partial-year figure through April 2026). The decrease in dedicated funding for CTE between FY24 and FY25 largely came from the conclusion of the Leading Idaho 2.0 grant at the conclusion of the 2024 school year (exhibit 13).

1. Career technical centers are ineligible for the three PQI, WRI, and IQPS grants. Only career technical centers may access CTC ACF.

Exhibit 13

About half of CTE funding is through Program Added Cost Funds (PACF).

Funding stream	FY 2024 (thousands)	FY 2025 (thousands)	FY 2026* (thousands)
PACF	\$17,785	\$13,997	\$14,945
CTC ACF	\$4,729	\$4,729	\$4,729
Perkins V	\$4,250	\$5,063	\$3,789
Leading Idaho 2.0	\$4,993	—	—
PQI	\$870	\$669	\$668
IQPS	\$463	\$471	\$453
WRI	\$190	\$131	—
Total	\$33,280	\$25,061	\$24,584

Note: *FY 2026 figures as of April 2026 (partial-year; with figures likely to adjust by fiscal year end due to Perkins reimbursement-based distribution method and WRI being distributed on May 31). Dollars in thousands. Source: IDCTE, CTE Secondary Funding: Allowable Uses, Funding Streams, and Per-LEA Distribution (May 2026).

PACF is consistently the largest funding stream, representing roughly 53 to 61 percent of CTE dedicated funding per year. CTC ACF is stable at \$4.7 million per year. Perkins V funds made up 13 percent of CTE funding in the 2024 school year and 20 percent in the 2025 school year, with the 2026 school year figure being incomplete due to the reimbursement nature of the funds. The remaining streams, PQI, IQPS, WRI, and the now concluded Leading Idaho 2.0, are smaller and more narrowly targeted.

Idaho Career Ready Students program

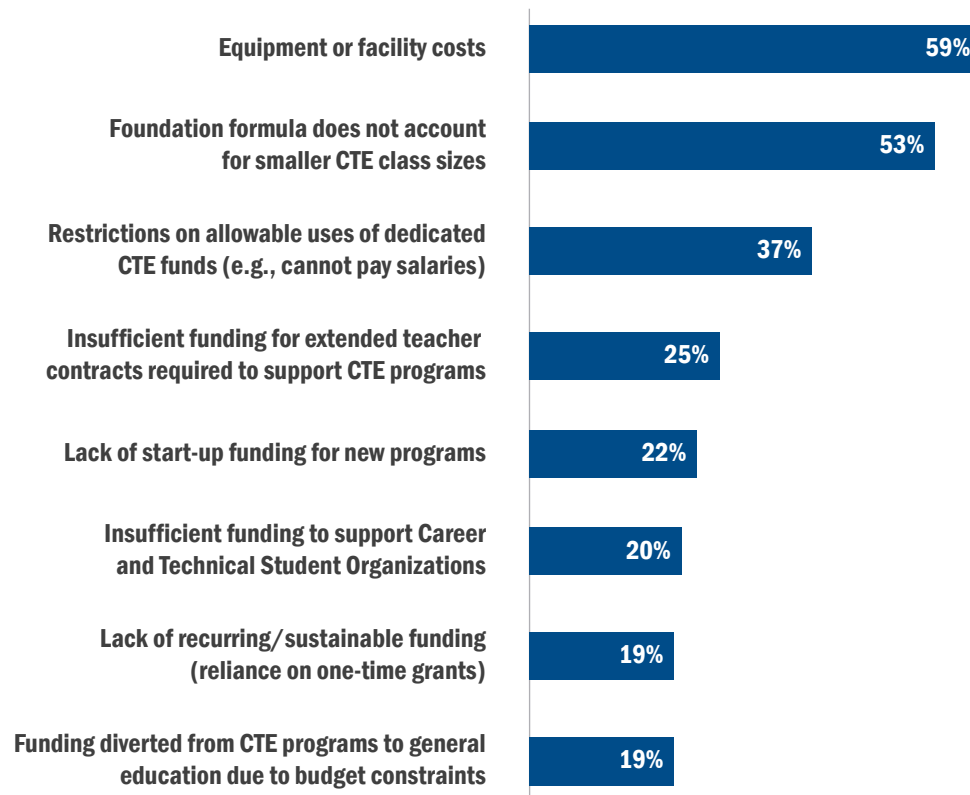
The Idaho Career Ready Students (ICRS) program is outside of IDCTE's dedicated CTE funding streams and is administered separately by the State Department of Education under Idaho Code §33-2214. It provides grants for capital and facility costs tied to new or expanding CTE programs. Since 2023, ICRS has awarded over \$64 million across 140 grants statewide, funded through periodic competitive grant rounds rather than a per-LEA formula distribution. The most recent round for the 2026 school year capped awards at \$50,000 per microgrant.

The majority of survey respondents said they face funding constraints related to providing CTE programs.

In our LEA survey respondents said dedicated PACF were the most widely used funding source, used by about 93 percent of responding LEAs, followed by Perkins V (77 percent) and PQI grants (57 percent). Nearly 60 percent of respondents reported funding constraints in operating CTE programs. When asked to identify the largest funding constraints, equipment and facility costs and a mismatch between the state foundation funding formula and CTE course sizes were the two most selected responses (exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14

Equipment or facility cost was the most cited funding constraint listed by survey respondents.



Source: Program Funding & Demand survey, select up to three (n=59).

Idaho's CTE funding structure has dedicated streams to address many of the funding constraints listed by survey respondents. As mentioned earlier, all seven of the dedicated CTE funding streams available to LEAs may be used for equipment. In contrast, facility improvements may only be paid for by the added cost funds for career technical centers and the now-defunct Leading Idaho Grant 2.0.

CTE class-size and state formula mismatch

A structural feature of the foundation formula intensifies the funding problem for CTE programming. Because state support is tied to support units that rely on the average daily attendance of an LEA, a CTE course capped at a smaller enrollment for safety and equipment reasons pulls more state funding than a larger academic class taught by the same teacher. When districts must reduce staffing to balance budgets against declining enrollment, the original study request suggested that core classes are typically maintained over smaller CTE sections, so CTE programs and other electives are sacrificed first.

Keeping CTE enrollment capped for safety and equipment reasons is well established in CTE practice nationally. Several states set explicit enrollment caps for hands-on CTE courses. Virginia maintains a list of CTE courses capped at a maximum of 20 students, and Connecticut's technical schools run trade shops of roughly 18 students versus academic classes of 20 to 28. Minnesota's Department of Education recommends that laboratory and shop classes do not exceed a 24-to-1 ratio and treats overcrowding in labs and at worksites as a leading CTE safety concern. In Wyoming's most recent adjustment to their state's education funding formula they recommended keeping CTE courses in areas such as welding, construction, and automotive technology to 15 students due to safety concerns and equipment limitations. In our survey, 53 percent of respondents said the foundation formula does not account for the smaller class sizes CTE requires.

53%
of respondents
said the foundation
formula does not
account for the
smaller class sizes
CTE requires.

Most of the dedicated CTE funding is not available to use on teacher salaries.

The central question for this study is which funding streams may be used for staffing costs. Exhibit 15 summarizes salary allowability.

Exhibit 15

Program Added Cost Funds (PACF), the most widely available CTE funding, cannot be used for teacher salaries.

Funding stream	Salary allowed?	Conditions
CTC ACF	Yes	Salary for CTE instruction attributable to the center; cannot supplant base staffing.
PACF	Yes — limited	Extra duty and extended time beyond contract only (extended contracts, career and technical student organization advisor travel, and health professions clinical supervision); base salary is not allowed.
Perkins V	Yes	Project-based positions with time-and-effort documentation; must not supplant.
PQI	No	Materials, equipment, and professional development only.
IQPS	No	Equipment for the eligible program only.
WRI	Yes	An LEA may elect to distribute funds to CTE teachers. In 2025 there was a cap of \$4,000 per qualifying teacher.
Leading Idaho 2.0	No	Equipment and facility improvements only (program concluded).

Source: IDCTE, CTE Secondary Funding: Allowable Uses, Funding Streams, and Per-LEA Distribution (May 2026).

The single largest CTE stream, PACF, cannot fund base teacher salaries. PACF may pay for extended contracts, such as time beyond the normal academic year, and advisor travel to leadership conferences, but not for base instructional salaries. Perkins V and WRI can be used on salaries but are not as wide reaching. CTC ACF is more permissive on salary but is only available to the 14 career technical centers.

Idaho's restriction on CTE funding for teacher salaries is an outlier compared to neighboring states.

Idaho is the only state among its regional neighbors that explicitly does not allow CTE added costs to be used for teacher salary (exhibit 16). Four states explicitly permit CTE funds to be used on salaries, Wyoming permits some funds to be used on teacher salaries, and Montana is ambiguous, in that they neither explicitly permit nor deny the use of added CTE funds on salary.

Exhibit 16

Dedicated CTE funding can be used for teacher salaries in neighboring states.

State	Salary use of dedicated CTE funds	Funding Name and Purpose	Base Formula or Added Cost	Basis
Nevada	Yes — explicit	State CTE Allocation & Competitive Grants Support state-approved CTE courses/programs in grades 6–12.	Added cost	FY26 State CTE Uses of Funds Guidance; NRS 391.125 licensure.
Oregon	Yes — explicit	High School Success Fund Targeted grants to expand dropout prevention, CTE, and college-level opportunities.	Added cost	High School Success Fund; ORS 327.865(2).
Utah	Yes — explicit	CTE Add-on Weighted Pupil Units — Added Cost Funds Supplemental per-average daily membership distribution for CTE program costs beyond standard secondary funding.	Added cost	Admin. Rule R277-911-12(7)(c)
Washington	Yes — explicit	CTE funding allocation Additional weights within the basic education school formula for students in CTE programs.	Base formula	CTE enhancement differential; RCW 28A.150.265.

Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

State	Salary use of dedicated CTE funds	Funding Name and Purpose	Base Formula or Added Cost	Basis
Wyoming	Split	(1) CTE teacher staffing/salary weight within the Education Resource Block Grant model; (2) CTE Supplies, Materials, and Equipment categorical grant for supplies, materials, and equipment only.	Split	Block grant CTE weight can be used for salaries; the supplies, materials, and equipment categorical stream cannot (2025 HB 18).
Montana	Ambiguous	Secondary K-12 Career and Vocational/Technical Education distribution Funds allocated to LEAs by weighted factors (CTE enrollment, CTSO participation, field supervision, district CTE expenditures), deposited in the district's miscellaneous programs fund.	Added cost	Statutes neither authorize nor prohibit.
Idaho	Restricted	Program Added Cost Funds (PACF) Per-FTE distribution for CTE program costs beyond normal secondary expenses.	Added cost	PACF base salary not allowed

Note: A state was coded 'explicit' where statute or administrative rule directly names salaries or staff compensation as an allowable or disallowed use; 'ambiguous' where the governing statute is silent on expenditure categories; and 'split' where a state operates two or more CTE-dedicated streams that differ in their salary treatment. Source: OPE six-state review of statutes and guidance of other state funding distributions.

Each state's dedicated CTE funding stream was identified as the closest structural analog to Idaho's PACF, in essence a per-teacher or per-pupil distribution intended to cover CTE program costs beyond standard secondary funding. However, due to differences in state funding models, comparing CTE funding directly between states is an imperfect metric. Most neighboring states allocate resources on a per-student basis and attach fewer restrictions on the use and purpose of state funds.



The funding models in Washington and Wyoming are the most similar to Idaho's support unit based funding formula, where state funds are primarily allocated based on a cohort of students. In both states the base education funding formula contains an add-on to assign additional CTE teachers to LEAs based on CTE enrollment. Washington allocates an additional CTE teacher for every 23 students enrolled in a CTE course and Wyoming allocates additional CTE teachers by taking 34 percent of an LEA's CTE students and dividing it by 25. Unlike Washington and Wyoming, the Public School Support Program in Idaho Code does not consider the additional resources needed by CTE students when calculating base state funding or appropriated teachers.

4

CTE Teacher Pay

CTE teacher salaries are similar to non-CTE salaries overall, but the comparability hides that CTE teachers earn a meaningful five percent premium at the entry rung. CTE teacher pay also varies greatly between program areas. Additionally, CTE teacher pay varies by local education agency (LEA) characteristics such as region, district setting, and district size.



CTE and non-CTE secondary teachers make similar annual salaries, with the exception of entry-level teachers.

Idaho LEAs employed roughly 1,000 CTE teachers in each year from 2024 through 2026 school years, versus approximately 17,000 to 18,000 non-CTE secondary teachers. CTE teachers were more likely than their peers to hold less than a full-time-equivalent (FTE) teaching assignment. About 89 percent of CTE teachers were at 1.0 FTE or higher across all three years, compared with roughly 95 percent of non-CTE teachers.² This partial-FTE pattern helps to interpret average salary comparisons. For the purposes of this section, all teacher salaries are adjusted to be equivalent to 1.0 FTE. A comparison of teacher salaries for those at or above 1.0 FTE can be found in appendix C.

At the statewide level, CTE and non-CTE teacher salaries were similar between the 2024 and 2026 school years (exhibit 17). Across all three years combined, CTE teachers were paid on average \$467 more, or about seven-tenths of one percent.

Exhibit 17

CTE teachers made on average almost \$500 more a year than non-CTE teachers in the 2024–2026 school years.

School year	CTE mean	Non-CTE mean	Gap (\$)	Gap (%)
2024	\$61,438	\$60,661	\$777	+1.3%
2025	\$63,028	\$62,859	\$169	+0.3%
2026	\$66,550	\$66,250	\$299	+0.5%
All years	\$63,704	\$63,237	\$467	+0.7%

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

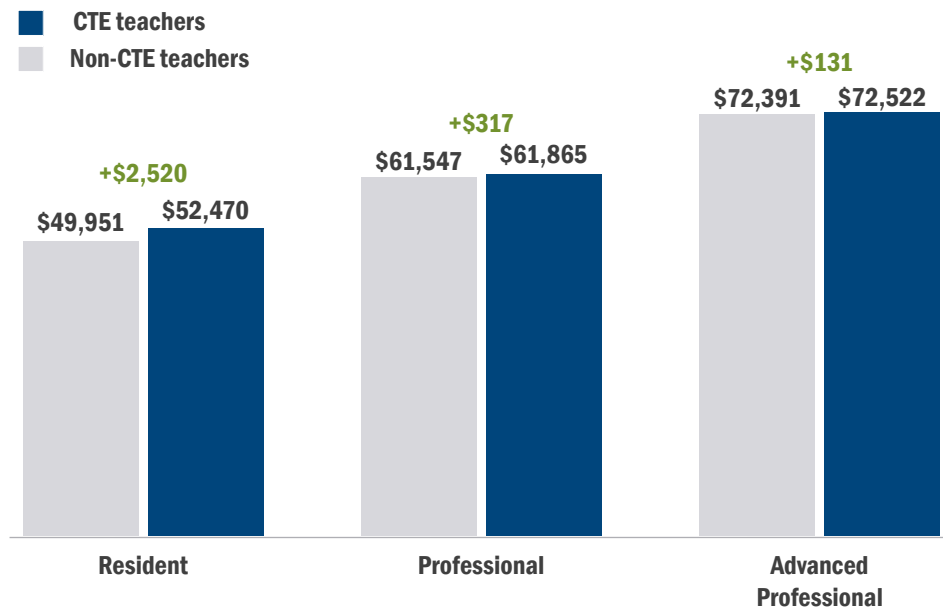
2. When analyzing teacher salaries and contracts, we omit salary that comes from administrative contracts a teacher may receive. A teacher with less than a 1.0 FTE in teaching contracts may have an administrative contract which brings them up to 1.0 FTE. Additionally, we do not account for a teacher who works for multiple LEAs as full time and instead treat each teacher as a separate individual at each LEA.

Most of the variation in teacher pay statewide is explained by salary schedule placement, whether a teacher is on the Resident, Professional, or Advanced Professional rungs of the career ladder, rather than by CTE status. We found that among the Resident career ladder rung, CTE teachers on average made about \$2,500 more than non-CTE teachers while CTE and non-CTE teacher salaries were more similar within the Professional and Advanced Professional rungs (exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18

CTE teacher salary is most different from non-CTE teachers on the Resident rung of the teacher career ladder.

Mean salary by career-ladder rung, CTE vs. non-CTE (all years)



Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

Newly entering CTE teachers on the Resident rung averaged around \$52,500 against nearly \$50,000 for non-CTE teachers, an advantage of about \$2,500, or 5.0 percent. This increase in pay is likely twofold. First, CTE educators entering from industry can be placed further along the career ladder to account for industry experience, meaning they do not start on the first step of three rungs on the Resident ladder. Second, CTE teachers with an occupational specialist credential qualify for an additional \$3,000 occupational specialist apportionment

from the state that is used for additional salary. Both advantages increase starting pay for CTE teachers above that of a conventional first-year teacher. The increase in pay for CTE teachers compresses with experience, to about \$317 (0.5 percent) at the Professional rung and \$131 (0.2 percent) at the Advanced Professional rung.

Idaho's existing formula tools already make CTE teaching financially competitive at the point of entry, the moment an industry professional is deciding whether to leave a private sector job. The premium does not persist into mid- and late-career pay, but the entry rung advantage is the state's most direct existing lever for the recruitment problem.

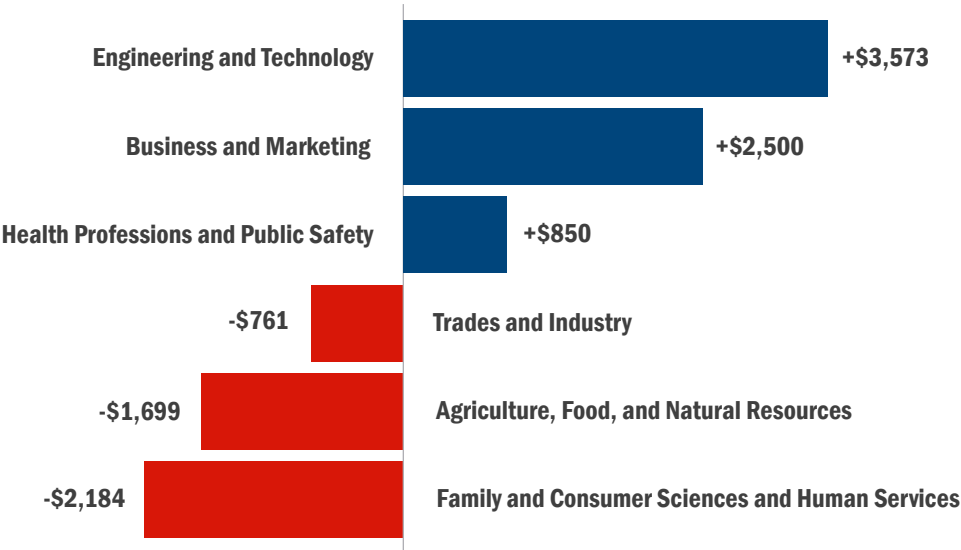
A 2026 change may reshape this pattern.

The salary figures above cover 2024–2026 school years and predate House Bill 849, enacted in the 2026 Idaho legislative session and effective July 1, 2026. Under prior law, an industry professional placed on the ladder using credit for verified industry experience still had to earn four years of proficient or higher evaluations before advancing to the next step on the Professional rung. HB 849 lets CTE teachers on the Professional rung advance after a single qualifying evaluation year. Because the mid-career compression documented here is potentially a product of that four-year wait, the law acts as a targeted response to a compression of CTE teacher salaries at the mid-career level.

CTE teacher pay varies between the different CTE program areas.

Program area CTE teacher pay is more varied than the statewide average. Three program areas are paid consistently above the non-CTE average and three are consistently paid below (exhibit 19).³

Exhibit 19
Teachers from three CTE program areas have an average pay higher than non-CTE teachers.



Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

Engineering and Technology (\$3,573) and Business and Marketing (\$2,500) sit well above the non-CTE average, while Family and Consumer Sciences (–\$2,184) and Agriculture (–\$1,699) sit below. These differences likely reflect the mix of credentials, experience, and district settings of each program area. As discussed later in this report, they do not track industry wage competitiveness, with some of the lowest paid program areas facing the least private sector wage pull.

3. For the purposes of this study, we do not track Individualized Occupational Training teacher salary specifically due to their infrequent and unique use by LEAs.

As shown in exhibit 20, CTE teacher pay at the Resident rung exceeds the non-CTE teacher pay in four of the six CTE program areas, with the Family and Consumer Sciences program area paying below the non-CTE average. As a teacher moves up the career ladder, the pay advantage for CTE teachers evens out in several of the program areas, with only Engineering and Technology consistently making more than their equivalent non-CTE peers. Health Professions and Public Safety program area make more at the Resident and Advanced Professional rungs, though about equal at the Professional rung.

Exhibit 20

Engineering and Technology teachers have higher average pay than non-CTE teachers across all three rungs of the career ladder.

Resident	\$50K	\$50K –	\$54K ↑	\$56K ↑	\$49K ↓	\$56K ↑	\$52K ↑
Professional	\$62K	\$60K ↓	\$64K ↑	\$64K ↑	\$60K ↓	\$62K –	\$60K ↓
Advanced Professional	\$72K	\$72K –	\$72K –	\$73K ↑	\$71K ↓	\$75K ↑	\$73K ↑
	Non-CTE teacher	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	Business and Marketing	Engineering and Technology	Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services	Health Professions and Public Safety	Trades and Industry

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

Teacher pay is influenced by LEA characteristics, such as region, setting, or district size.

The statewide averages for salaries hide substantial variation, both when comparing CTE to non-CTE teachers but also when comparing CTE teachers to themselves. Two CTE teachers on the same career ladder rung, teaching in the same program area, can earn different salaries depending on where in the state they work, what kind of community their district serves, and how large that district is. All three dimensions matter and the Resident CTE premium is found across nearly every breakdown.

CTE teacher pay by region

Idaho's six education regions show a north-to-southeast gradient in CTE pay. The two northern regions pay the most on average for CTE teachers, Region 2 (North Central) at about \$66,500 and Region 1 (Northern) at about \$65,400. Region 6 (Eastern) pays the least at about \$60,000. The Southwest (Region 3) sits in the middle at about \$64,800 which has over 40 percent of the state's CTE teachers (exhibit 21).

Exhibit 21

All but one education region pays CTE teachers more than their non-CTE counterparts on average.

Region	CTE mean	vs. local non-CTE	CTE teacher count	CTE teacher percentage of all secondary teachers
Region 1 (Northern)	\$65,426	\$885	278	5%
Region 2 (North Central)	\$66,479	\$700	184	6%
Region 3 (Southwest)	\$64,830	\$455	1,372	6%
Region 4 (South Central)	\$64,270	\$787	475	6%
Region 5 (Southeast)	\$61,133	\$1,266	286	5%
Region 6 (Eastern)	\$59,983	-\$489	555	6%

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

In five of six regions, CTE teachers outearn local non-CTE teachers, while in Region 6 they earn slightly less. The regional pay gradient largely reflects each region's overall teacher pay scale rather than any region treating CTE teachers distinctively. The clearest CTE-specific pattern is at the Resident rung. Entering CTE teachers outearn entering non-CTE teachers in five of six regions, by as much as \$6,000 in Region 2 and \$3,900 in Region 3. In Region 6, CTE teachers on the Resident rung of the career ladder make on average \$35 less per year than their non-CTE peers.

When looking at CTE teacher pay by region and CTE program area two patterns stand out (exhibit 22). First, the program area premiums identified earlier are consistent in most regions. Engineering and Technology and Business and Marketing are the highest paid program areas in nearly every region, peaking at about \$73,000 for Engineering in Region 2. Second, Agriculture is below the non-CTE teacher pay in all six education regions, and its variance in pay between the regions is relatively small, coming in at less than a \$4,000 difference between the highest paying (Region 3) and lowest paying (Region 6) regions. All the other CTE program areas see a difference of at least \$7,000 between the regions. It should be acknowledged that small headcounts in some region program area cells (for example, Health Professions in Region 2 had only 10 total teachers over the three school years) mean these figures should be read as general patterns rather than exact numbers.

Exhibit 22

Teachers in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources are paid below the non-CTE teacher mean in every education region.

Region 1	\$65K	\$62K ↓	\$70K ↑	\$68K ↑	\$65K —	\$62K ↓	\$62K ↓
Region 2	\$66K	\$61K ↓	\$71K ↑	\$73K ↑	\$58K ↓	\$63K ↓	\$68K ↑
Region 3	\$64K	\$63K ↓	\$66K ↑	\$67K ↑	\$62K ↓	\$66K ↑	\$64K —
Region 4	\$63K	\$62K ↓	\$67K ↑	\$66K ↑	\$64K ↑	\$66K ↑	\$61K ↓
Region 5	\$60K	\$59K ↓	\$65K ↑	\$65K ↑	\$58K ↓	\$59K ↓	\$61K ↑
Region 6	\$60K	\$59K ↓	\$60K —	\$65K ↑	\$59K ↓	\$57K ↓	\$59K ↓
	Non-CTE teacher	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	Business and Marketing	Engineering and Technology	Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services	Health Professions and Public Safety	Trades and Industry

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

CTE teacher pay by setting

Classifying districts by community type, City, Town, Rural, Remote, career technical center and charter, reveals a clearer pattern than region. Average CTE pay declines as areas become less urban, from about \$65,200 in City districts to \$60,200 in Remote districts. However, as an LEA becomes more remote, the advantage of CTE teacher pay over non-CTE teachers becomes more pronounced (exhibit 23).

Exhibit 23

Differences in teacher pay between CTE and non-CTE teachers is greatest in Remote districts and Charter Schools.

LEA setting	CTE mean	vs. comparative non-CTE	CTE teacher count	CTE teacher percentage of all secondary teachers
City	\$65,230	\$572	1,184	4%
Town	\$64,023	\$118	692	7%
Rural	\$61,259	\$923	609	8%
Remote	\$60,167	\$1,246	299	9%
Career Technical Center	\$63,504	-\$1,910	153	66%
Charter	\$66,299	\$5,011	213	4%

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

The effect is most dramatic at the Resident rung, where Remote district CTE teachers outearn their non-CTE peers by about \$4,500. This suggests smaller and more isolated districts are stretching to pay a premium to attract CTE teachers, even though their overall pay scales are lower. Charter schools have the largest CTE premium of any setting, about \$5,000, and that advantage is broadly based, appearing at both the Resident and Professional rungs.

Teacher pay by CTE program area varies by school setting (exhibit 24). Family and Consumer Sciences is the most consistently low-paying program area among the City and Town settings, though it fairs better at charter schools and career technical centers.

Exhibit 24

Business and Marketing Education is the only program area with higher average pay than non-CTE teachers across all LEA settings.

City	\$65K	\$65K —	\$66K ↑	\$68K ↑	\$62K ↓	\$65K —	\$66K ↑
Town	\$64K	\$61K ↓	\$68K ↑	\$67K ↑	\$60K ↓	\$65K ↑	\$61K ↓
Rural	\$60K	\$62K ↑	\$62K ↑	\$65K ↑	\$60K —	\$58K ↓	\$59K ↓
Remote	\$59K	\$58K ↓	\$61K ↑	\$60K ↑	\$59K —	\$61K ↑	\$60K ↑
Career Technical	\$65K	\$63K ↓	\$69K ↑	\$63K ↓	\$66K ↑	\$67K ↑	\$65K —
Charter	\$61K	\$63K ↑	\$69K ↑	\$63K ↑	\$66K ↑	\$67K ↑	\$65K ↑
	Non-CTE teacher	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	Business and Marketing	Engineering and Technology	Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services	Health Professions and Public Safety	Trades and Industry

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

CTE teacher pay by district size (group)

Idaho assigns districts to support groups by size, with Group 1 the largest and Group 4 the smallest (charter schools and career technical centers are excluded from this analysis). District size is strongly associated with CTE pay. Average salary falls steadily from about \$64,900 in the largest (Group 1) districts to \$59,100 in the smallest (exhibit 25). We found that as a district becomes smaller, the percentage of their teacher workforce who teach a CTE course becomes larger. This could be due to the nature of smaller districts having fewer teachers, requiring teachers to teach in multiple subject areas.

Exhibit 25

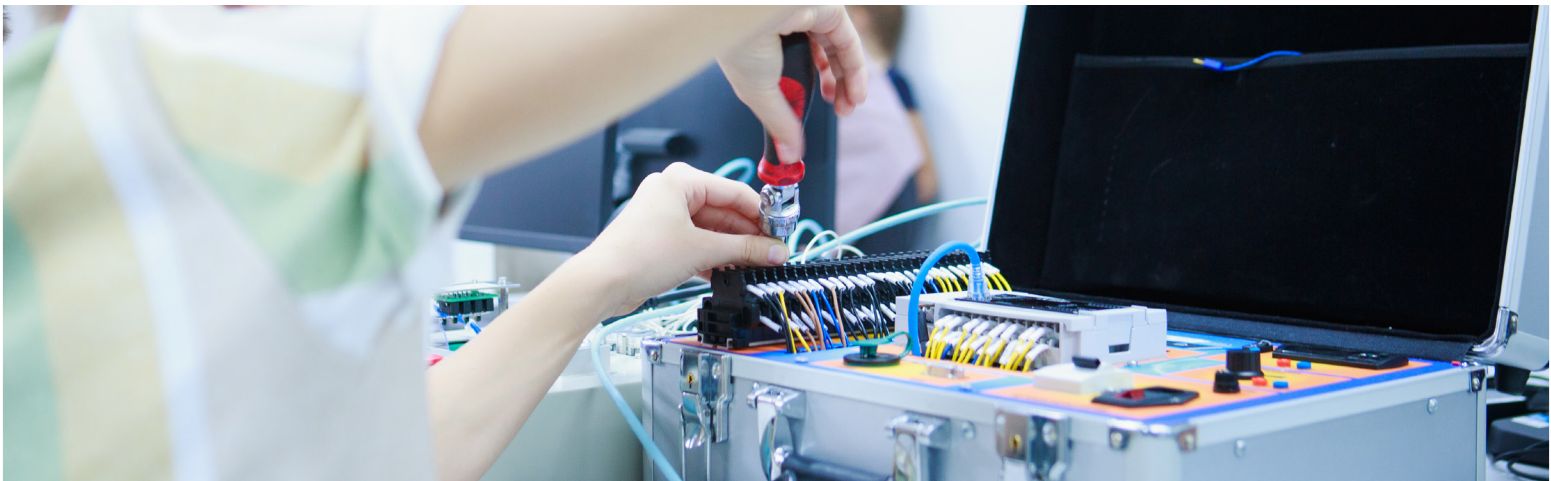
The smallest districts in the state, Group 4, have the highest percentage of CTE teachers.

Support group	CTE mean	vs. local non-CTE	CTE teacher count	CTE teacher percentage of all secondary teachers
Group 1 (largest)	\$64,870	\$705	1,887	5%
Group 2	\$61,729	\$1,090	407	8%
Group 3	\$60,156	\$129	325	10%
Group 4 (smallest)	\$59,080	-\$1,147	165	14%

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

The largest districts pay CTE teachers about \$700 more than their non-CTE teachers. Mid-size Group 2 districts pay the largest premium, about \$1,090, and the smallest districts (Group 4) pay CTE teachers about \$1,150 less than their non-CTE peers. This can be partially attributed to the type of CTE courses being offered among the smallest districts.

From the 2024 through 2026 school years, LEAs in Group 4 had only six CTE teachers in the Engineering and Technology program area and two in the Health Professions and Public Safety program area, the two program areas with some of the highest average pay. Simultaneously, 43 percent of CTE teachers at districts



in Group 4 taught in the Agriculture program area, the second lowest paying program area. This proportion of Agriculture programs was substantially higher than Agriculture in all other district groups, which ranged from 15 percent to 28 percent.

Beyond this, teachers in all CTE program areas in Group 4 make less than the non-CTE teachers in the group (exhibit 26). Group 2 has the highest paid CTE program area with Engineering and Technology being paid \$70,000 on average, though that is likely due to the lower amounts of teachers in the program area compared to Group 1. Only five percent of CTE teachers in Group 2 teach in the Engineering and Technology program area compared to 17 percent in Group 1.

Exhibit 26

CTE teachers in Group 4 made less on average than non-CTE teachers across all program areas.

Group	Non-CTE teacher	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	Business and Marketing	Engineering and Technology	Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services	Health Professions and Public Safety	Trades and Industry
Group 1	\$64K	\$63K ↓	\$67K ↑	\$67K ↑	\$61K ↓	\$64K —	\$65K ↑
Group 2	\$61K	\$59K ↓	\$64K ↑	\$70K ↑	\$61K —	\$64K ↑	\$59K ↓
Group 3	\$60K	\$62K ↑	\$61K ↑	\$61K ↑	\$55K ↓	\$59K ↓	\$59K ↓
Group 4	\$60K	\$59K ↓	\$59K ↓	\$59K ↓	\$59K ↓	\$54K ↓	\$56K ↓

Source: ISEE data, OPE analysis.

5

CTE Teacher Recruitment and Industry Competitiveness

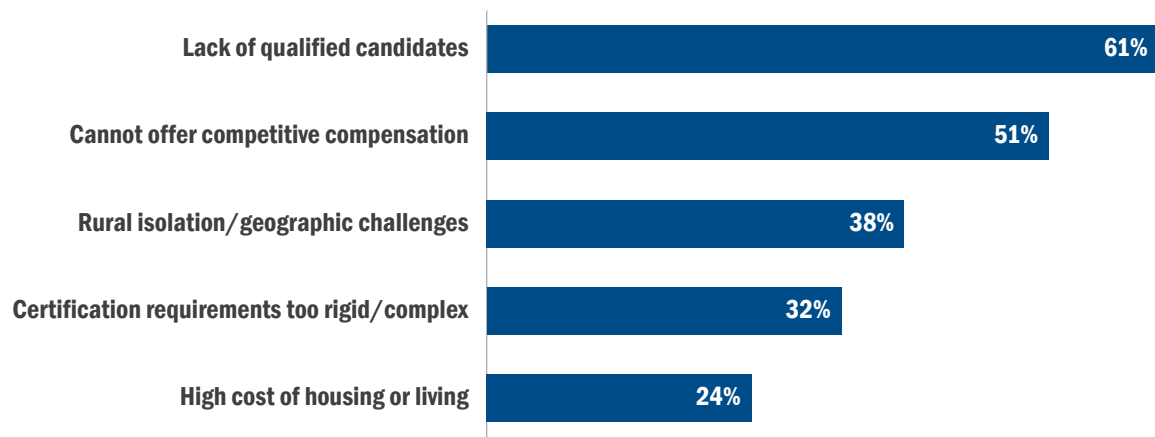
Compensation is not the only obstacle standing between CTE programs and the industry professionals who could staff them. This chapter turns from how much CTE teachers are paid, covered in Chapter 4, to whether that pay is enough to compete and what other barriers stand in the way of recruiting and retaining CTE teachers. Survey data from Idaho local education agencies (LEAs) point to two reinforcing problems: CTE compensation that does not keep pace with private industry wages, and Idaho has a credentialing system that, while designed to bring industry professionals into the classroom, adds complexity to that transition.

CTE professionals found recruiting CTE teachers to be difficult.

According to our survey, recruiting is difficult for most LEAs. About 66 percent of respondents found recruiting CTE instructors very or somewhat difficult over the past five years; only 7 percent found it easy. The respondents cited two reinforcing problems, too few qualified candidates and an inability to compete on pay (exhibit 27).

Exhibit 27

Lack of qualified candidates was the most frequently cited barrier for recruiting CTE instructors.

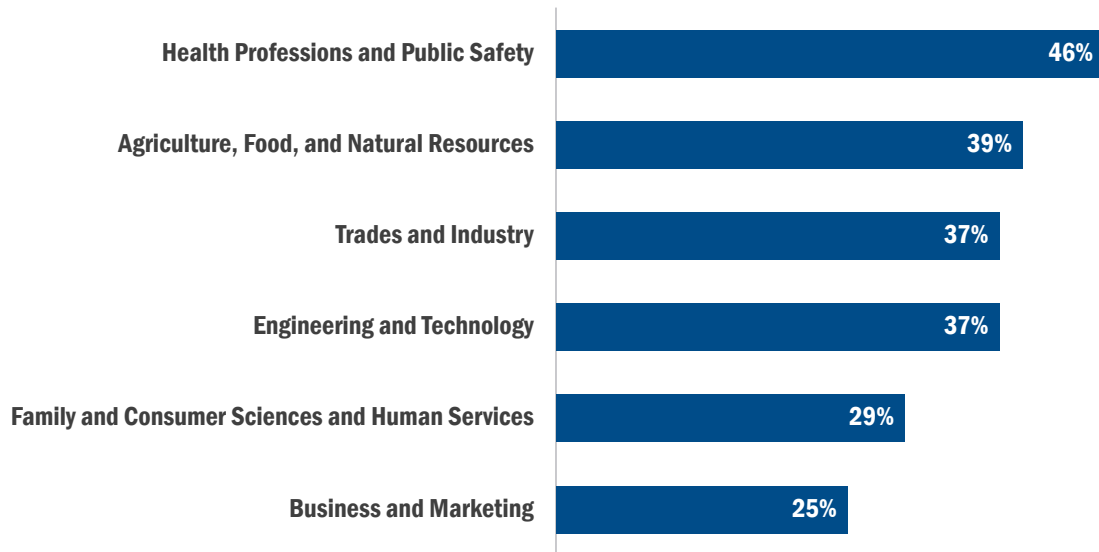


Source: Teacher Recruitment & Retention survey (n=117).

Health Professions and Public Safety was frequently cited as the most difficult program area to recruit CTE teachers (exhibit 28). This mirrors the discussion earlier in the report where survey respondents said the Health Professions program area was the most frequently reported program area that LEAs were unable to offer. The most frequently reported difficult pathways for recruiting teachers were Nursing Assistants (28 percent of respondents), Agriculture Welding (20 percent), and Medical Assisting (19 percent).

Exhibit 28

Health Professions and Public Safety was the most cited program area that survey respondents said they struggled to recruit teachers for.



Source: Teacher Recruitment & Retention survey (n=102).

76%
of survey
respondents
cited the
lack of a
qualified CTE
instructor as
a reason they
canceled a
CTE program.

This challenge in recruiting CTE teachers has already produced program losses. Forty percent of respondents report pausing or canceling a CTE program since the 2022 school year, and among those, 76 percent cited the lack of a qualified CTE instructor as the leading reason.

About 21 percent of respondents reported currently unfilled CTE positions, totaling 35 vacancies statewide. Of those that reported vacancies, 41 percent said they had a vacancy in Health Professions and Public Safety, and 27 percent each cited Engineering and Technology Education, Business and Marketing Education, and Trades and Industry.

Most LEAs described their CTE workforce as stable. Roughly 71 percent reported a very or mostly stable workforce, while about 26 percent reported some turnover. When teachers leave, the most common reasons were retirement (37 percent), a return to private-sector employment (35 percent), and compensation (32 percent). When asked what mattered most for retention, respondents pointed first to competitive compensation (76 percent), followed by adequate equipment and facilities (47 percent), and administrative support (41 percent).

Teacher certification is a structural barrier for CTE. Idaho offers four broad routes into CTE teaching: a college student route, the industry-professional Occupational Specialist route, a CTE endorsement or new certificate for current teachers, and a Content Specialist alternative authorization. Three of these routes are designed to specifically bring people in from outside traditional teacher preparation. Certification was one of the most cited recruiting barriers (32 percent), and respondents' most requested supports included easier access to alternative or provisional licensure (44 percent) and streamlined certification for industry professionals (36 percent). Every one of Idaho's six regions independently named credentialing barriers for industry professionals as a recruitment constraint in IDCTE's FY25 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment.

Every one of Idaho's six regions independently named credentialing barriers for industry professionals as a recruitment constraint.

CTE teacher pay is typically below private industry average, though it is dependent on the CTE program area.

The comparability of CTE to non-CTE teacher pay discussed in chapter 4 does not mean CTE pay is competitive. The relevant benchmark for many CTE fields is private-industry wages. Nearly 60 percent of survey respondents rated CTE instructor compensation as not competitive with local industry wages, and only about seven percent rated it competitive or highly competitive (exhibit 29). IDCTE’s FY25 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment identified industry wages as a factor contributing to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining CTE teachers. Idaho wage data supports this perception.

Exhibit 29
Survey respondents for the most part did not view CTE teacher pay as competitive with local industry wages.

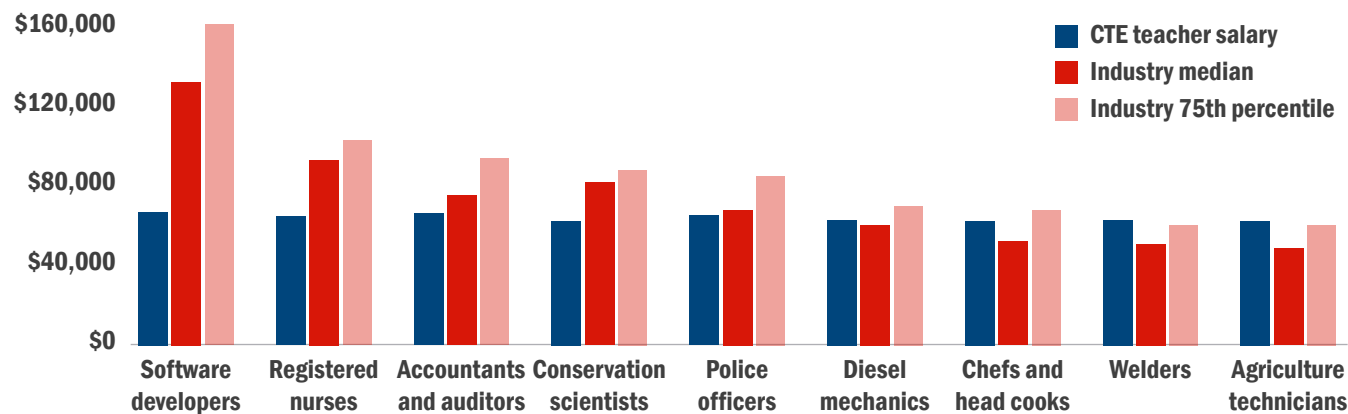


Source: Teacher Recruitment & Retention survey (n=118).

Using May 2025 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) for Idaho, exhibit 30 compares the average CTE teacher salary against the median and 75th percentile industry wages for the types of occupations associated with a CTE program area. The 75th percentile is the more relevant benchmark for recruitment, because the credible CTE teacher candidate is typically an experienced professional, not an entry-level worker.

Exhibit 30

Depending on the type of course taught CTE teacher pay can either be below or above industry wages in Idaho.



Note: Industry wages are annual, BLS OEWS May 2025 (Idaho statewide). Part of the apparent gap reflects that teaching contracts are typically shorter than year-round industry employment, and the comparison excludes differences in benefits, schedule, and job security. Figures are illustrative of relative magnitude, not exact take-home differences. Sources: BLS OEWS May 2025 (Idaho); ISEE/OPE salary analysis.

Idaho’s median software developer salary outpaces the average CTE teacher’s by about \$65,000 a year.

Industry pay substantially exceeds CTE teacher pay in the three highest-wage program areas: Health, Engineering, and the higher-skill Business and Marketing fields. The gap widens at the 75th percentile where an experienced candidate could earn more. A registered nurse earns roughly \$28,000 more than the average Health CTE teacher at the median and \$38,000 more at the 75th percentile, a software developer earns about \$65,000 more at the median, and an accountant earns about \$9,000 more at the median. These are also some the program areas that survey respondents identified as the hardest to staff.

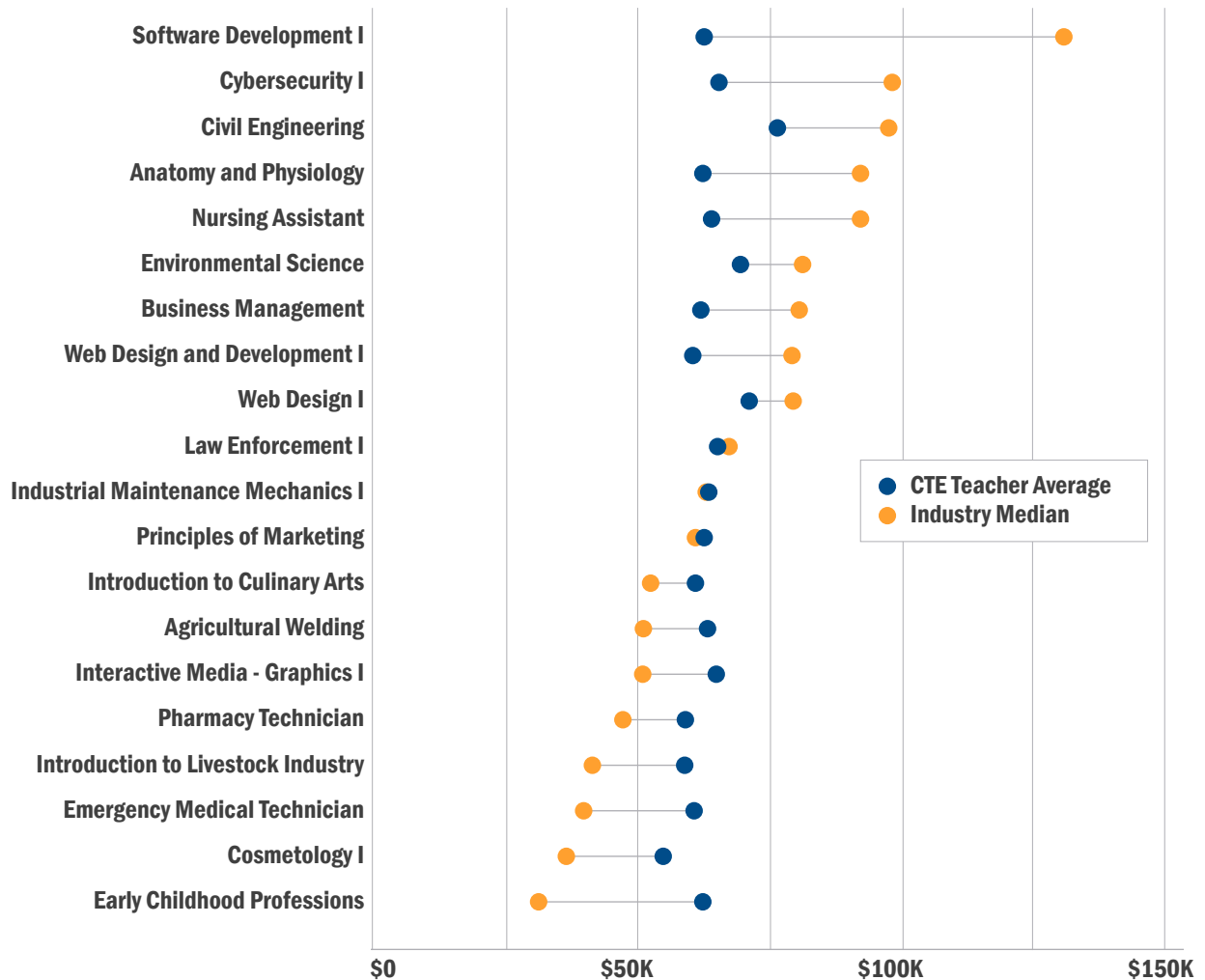
Several common agricultural occupations, such as equipment operators, farmworkers, and many agricultural technicians, pay below CTE teaching. The private-sector pull is weaker, and Agriculture CTE teachers are less likely to face the competition seen elsewhere. The higher-paying agricultural occupations, such as conservation scientists, are degree-intensive scientific roles. The competitiveness problem is highest exactly where industry pays the most, such as health and engineering, and lowest where it pays the least.

Pairing each occupation with the pay of teachers in the specific CTE course that trains toward it (such as welding course teachers against welders, programming course teachers against software developers), isolates rather than softens the gap (exhibit 31).

Teachers of Programming and Software Development I (earning an average of about \$62,300) sit roughly \$70,000 below software developers; teachers of Civil Engineering and Architecture (about \$76,400, among the highest-paid CTE courses) fall short of civil engineers; a teacher of a Nursing Assistant course, which requires the teacher to hold a valid nursing license, trails the median pay of a registered nurse by \$29,000. Family and Consumer Sciences is similar to Agriculture, its matched occupations (cooks, childcare workers, hairdressers) pay below CTE teaching. Meanwhile, Business and Marketing is competitive on pay for graphic designing and marketing roles but well behind management and finance destinations. The competitiveness problem increases the higher the wage of the associated occupation. Ultimately, we found that industry wages in Idaho vary greatly by job type, but teacher pay was more compressed. CTE teachers in higher-paying fields such as Engineering and Technology and Health Professions and Public Safety may make more than many of their counterparts in other CTE program areas, but the increase in pay pales in comparison to the difference in pay within private sector industry. More information on the comparisons to industry wages and a larger list of comparisons can be found in appendix C.

Exhibit 31

The difference between CTE teacher pay and industry wages differed greatly not only between the different program areas but also within the specific courses in a program area.



Note: Course-level teacher means rest on smaller samples than program area averages and should be read as indicative for low-headcount courses. The same contract length and benefits caveats noted above apply. Sources: BLS OEWS May 2025 (Idaho); course-level ISEE/OPE salary analysis; IDCTE 2024-25 Assignment Credential Manual.

Idaho offers multiple credential paths for industry professionals, college students, and current teachers to become CTE teachers.

Idaho offers four broad routes into CTE teaching which are governed by the Board of Education's Rules Governing Uniformity (IDAPA 08.02.02). Three of the four routes are designed specifically to bring people in from outside traditional teacher preparation, such as from industry or another teaching field.

College student route (IDAPA 08.02.02.015.04.a). A candidate completes an approved educator preparation program, accrues 1,000 clock hours of related work experience or a practicum, completes student teaching, and passes a content-area assessment, earning a renewable Degree Based Career Technical Certificate in one of eight discipline areas.

The Occupational Specialist route (IDAPA 08.02.02.015.04.c). This is the principal path for bringing skilled workers into the classroom and the one most relevant to the compensation discussion above. A candidate with industry experience first earns a Limited Occupational Specialist (LOS) certificate (valid three years and non-renewable) then may teach while completing requirements to reach the renewable Standard Occupational Specialist (SOS) certificate (via either Industry to Educator or university coursework). Candidates may eventually obtain the Advanced Occupational Specialist (AOS) certificate if they complete a teaching degree or complete additional credits of education or content-area coursework beyond the SOS requirement. Because a candidate can begin teaching at the LOS stage, this route lets industry professionals begin teaching quickly, but the non-renewable LOS certificate and the multi-step progression also create the credentialing complexity that respondents flagged.

Current teacher route (IDAPA 08.02.02.021.02 and 08.02.02.042.01). An already certified Idaho teacher employed by a district can pursue a secondary CTE credential through the CTE Alternative Authorization—Teacher-to-New (CTEAA-TN) process, which offers two distinct authorizations with different requirements: a new endorsement added to an existing certificate or a new certificate.

To add a new CTE endorsement, a teacher must complete one of three options: an official statement of competency in the teaching area from an accredited college of education's teacher preparation program, in lieu of coursework; a master's degree or higher in the content area, paired with a one-year State Board approved mentoring program completed within the first year to maintain the endorsement; or a State Board approved content-area assessment paired with that same one-year mentoring requirement. All candidates pursuing an initial CTE endorsement must also complete coursework in the principles of career technical education and career technical student organizations, training in occupational analysis and curriculum design, and a minimum of 200 internship or externship hours in the endorsement area.

To earn a new certificate instead, a teacher must hold a baccalaureate degree and complete an educator preparation program.

Content specialist route (IDAPA 08.02.02.042.02). The CTE Alternative Authorization Content Specialist (CTEAA-CS) path allows a district to authorize a degree holder who demonstrates content knowledge on an interim and non-renewable three-year certificate. The candidate must demonstrate proof of content competency through either holding a minimum of baccalaureate degree in endorsement-related area, obtaining a passing score on board approved related content to the endorsement area, or obtaining a passing score on the State Board of Education's Uniform Standard for Evaluating Content Competency.

In addition to the routes listed above, there is a separate CTE public charter teacher route for teachers at a charter school who do not hold a Degree Based Career Technical or Occupational Specialist Certificate to serve as a Career Technical Education certificated charter teacher. The requirements are the same as the LOS certificate.

Most CTE teachers in our dataset either held a Degree-Based CTE Certificate or one of the three Occupational Specialist credentials. The CTE Alternative Authorizations made up only five percent of all CTE teachers over the three school years we reviewed (exhibit 32).

Exhibit 32

Degree-based CTE certificates were the most commonly held teaching certificates.

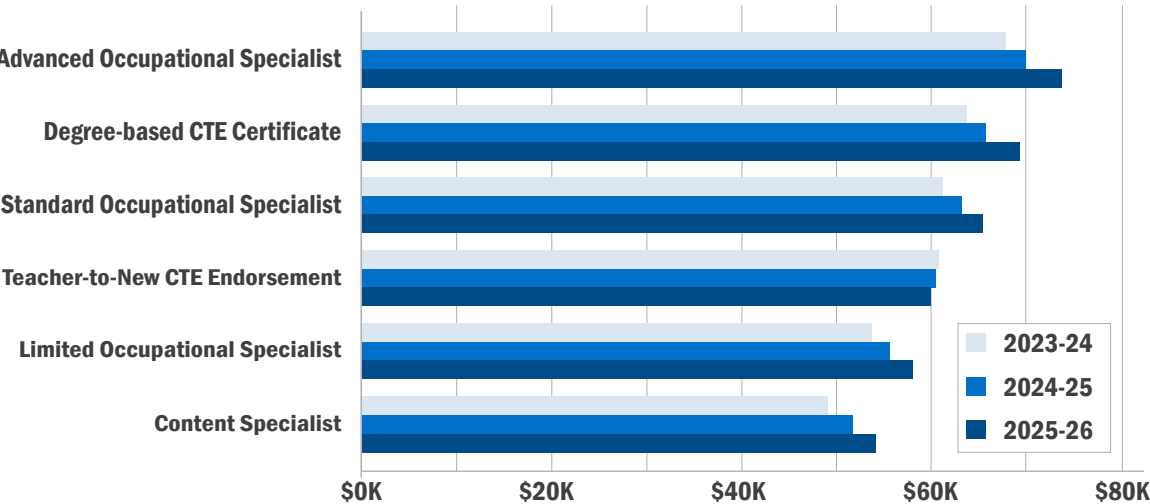
Credential type	CTE teacher count by school year		
	2024	2025	2026
Degree-Based CTE Certificate	514	508	492
Limited Occupational Specialist	154	170	158
Standard Occupational Specialist	208	194	212
Advanced Occupational Specialist	181	207	208
CTE Alternative Authorization–Content Specialist	34	34	23
CTE Alternative Authorization–Teacher-to-New Endorsement	19	21	22
CTE Alternative Authorization–Teacher-to-New Certificate	5	4	7

Note: An eighth credential type, CTE Provisional Authorization, is no longer used. There were 10 teachers with this endorsement in the 2024 school year. Total CTE teacher counts by credential type do not match the total CTE teacher counts by year reported in Chapter 4, as some CTE teachers held multiple credential types in a given year. Source: OPE analysis of ISEE data.

CTE teachers with entry-point credentials for industry professions are paid the least.

A credential type held by a CTE teacher carries a clear and consistent salary signal. Across all three school years, the Advanced Occupational Specialist (AOS) credential had the highest average pay, while the entry-level Limited Occupational Specialist (LOS) and the Content Specialist alternative authorization had the lowest (exhibit 33).

Exhibit 33
Advanced Occupational Specialists and Degree-Based CTE teachers were the highest paid CTE teachers on average.



Source: OPE analysis of ISEE data. Teacher-to-New Certificate not included due to low number of teachers holding credential.

The pattern matches the structure of the credential route previously described. Advanced Occupational Specialists, industry professionals who have completed full teacher training or equivalent coursework, averaged about \$73,800 in the 2026 school year, the highest paying credential. These teachers likely have the most experience teaching as well, as they have moved from Occupational Specialist credentials before obtaining the AOS credential. Degree-Based Career Technical certificate holders, the largest group with 492 CTE teachers in the 2026 school year, averaged about \$69,300 in 2026.

At the lower end, the LOS certificate, the entry point for industry professionals, averaged about \$58,000 in 2026, and the Content Specialist alternative authorization about \$54,000. Pay for every credential type rose slightly over the three years except for the small Teacher-to-New Endorsement group, which remained relatively flat.

Two features stand out for the recruitment discussion. First, the credentials that bring industry professionals in at the start, Limited Occupational Specialist and the alternative authorizations, are the lowest paid, which means a new industry entrant typically begins both below the CTE average and well below private-sector wages, and only climbs as they progress through the Occupational Specialist route. Second, headcounts are small for several alternative routes (for example, there were fewer than ten Teacher-to-New certificate holders in any year), so their year-to-year averages should be read with caution.

A new industry entrant typically begins both below the CTE average and well below private-sector wages.

6

Policy Options

The barriers to recruiting and retaining CTE teachers documented in this report are distinct problems, and they call for distinct responses. Idaho's dedicated CTE funding cannot reach a teacher's base paycheck. The Public School Support Program does not account for CTE's smaller class sizes. The credentialing system meant to bring industry professionals into the classroom is also the system that pays them least. The state's smallest districts face all of these pressures at once with the least capacity to absorb them. The options below address each of these problems individually. Several have already been adopted in some form by one or more of Idaho's regional neighbors, and some are more effective in combination than alone.

51%
of
respondents
put higher
base pay in
their top five.

31%
called it the
single most
impactful
change.

We provided survey respondents with a list of possible supports or policy changes that would be most helpful for CTE program administration and asked them to select up to five, then had them narrow down to the single most impactful choice among those five. Higher base pay for CTE instructors, funded through the state foundation formula, led both selections by a wide margin: 51 percent of respondents put it in their top five, and 31 percent named it the single most impactful change (exhibit 34). Easier access to alternative or provisional licensure drew the second-highest broad support (44 percent) but fell to 12 percent when forced to a single choice. Increased flexibility to use CTE funds for salaries or stipends followed a similar pattern in reverse, drawing somewhat less broad support (40 percent) but edging out licensure once respondents had to pick just one (13 percent).

Exhibit 34

Higher base pay for CTE teachers was listed as the most impactful policy change that would help LEAs offer CTE programming.

Policy support/change	Top 5	Most impactful
Higher base pay from state foundation formula	51%	31%
Easier access to alternative/provisional licensure	44%	12%
Increased flexibility to use CTE funds for salaries/stipends	40%	13%
Streamlined certification for industry professionals	36%	6%
Additional career-ladder credit for prior industry experience	34%	4%
Expanded “grow your own” pathways	32%	5%
Additional state incentives/grants for new CTE pathways	30%	5%
More public awareness/promotion of CTE as a career path	28%	1%
Stronger alignment between workforce needs and CTE offerings	24%	0%
State-supported mentoring/onboarding for new instructors	24%	1%
Training on CTE program management, Perkins compliance, or instructional strategies	24%	5%
Expanded endorsement options for CTE subject areas	20%	4%
Additional targeted state-funded professional development for CTE instructors	20%	5%
State-level support for navigating CTE credentialing requirements	17%	2%
Increased support for regional collaboration between LEAs (e.g., shared CTE instructors, shared programs, or regional consortia)	13%	2%

Source: OPE survey of LEA respondents; (top 15 of 17 options), n=115 (Q18), n=112 (Q19).

These priorities track closely with the options that follow in this chapter. Respondents’ top three, compensation, licensure, and funding flexibility, correspond directly to the funding, credentialing, and compensation sections below, and the survey’s own ranking offers a rough guide to where LEAs would place the most weight among them.

Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

The Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE) reports active work on several of the policy options presented to survey respondents. It has launched free in-house alternative authorization training and a State Board-approved teacher apprenticeship program, and is developing a mentoring framework for districts. On certification, it has aligned CTE endorsement requirements to program standards, reduced procedural barriers, reallocated staff to certification processing, and begun automating the process. On PACF, IDCTE is building a new funding model with a Regional Educational Laboratory, due December 2026, and pursuing three State Board policy changes to cover exam costs, in-state career technical student organization student travel, and a new Construction endorsement pathway. It is also working on regional staffing consortiums and mapping programs to workforce needs with the Workforce Development Council.



Allowing a portion of Program Added Cost Funds to be used for base teacher salary would align Idaho with four of its six regional neighbors, though without new appropriated funding it would compete directly with equipment costs.

We found that Idaho is the only state among six regional neighbors that explicitly disallows CTE funds from paying base teacher salary. Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington each authorize salary use by statute or rule, Wyoming permits it only for unrestricted block grant funds, and Montana's statutes are silent on the question. Idaho could be brought in line with this practice by amending the Program Added Cost Funds (PACF) to permit some portion of a district's PACF distribution to be applied to base instructional salary, rather than the current practice of restricting it to extended contracts, career and technical student organization advisor travel, and health professions clinical supervision.⁴

A narrower version of this option would limit expanded salary use to Health Professions and Public Safety, Trades and Industry, and Engineering and Technology, rather than opening salary use across all six program areas at once. These are the program areas both the IDCTE's FY25 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) and our wage analysis identified as facing the steepest combination of unmet demand and private-sector competition.

4. Using PACF funds for salary as opposed to one of the other state-funded grants would have two benefits: more LEAs have access to PACF funds and there would be less variance in availability year-to-year.

The central trade-off is that PACF is not new money. Equipment and facility costs are the single most cited funding constraint in our survey, named by 59 percent of respondents, and PACF is currently the most widely available funding source LEAs can direct toward equipment. Allowing districts to redirect existing PACF dollars toward salary, without increasing the size of the fund, would mean some LEAs trade an equipment problem for a staffing solution rather than solving both. A companion increase to PACF's total appropriation, or a requirement that expanded salary use draw only from incremental new funding, would blunt this trade-off but would carry a fiscal cost. In our discussions with IDCTE they have indicated that expanded salary use for PACF would require new appropriation rather than reallocation of existing funds.

PACF distributions primarily rely on the prior year's CTE teacher full-time equivalents (FTEs). For several years IDCTE has set aside a portion of PACF for new programs that have been approved and verified as started by the October upload to ISEE. These funds, along with the start-up funds available for new programs within the Program Quality Initiative and Idaho Quality Program Standards grants, could serve as a bridge for new programs if rule were to change. However, without a corresponding increase in appropriated funds, expanding the allowable uses of PACF would spread an already limited pool across more competing purposes, leaving less available for the start-up costs that 22 percent of survey respondents already identified as a barrier to launching new CTE programs.

Adjusting the Public School Support Program to account for CTE's smaller class sizes would address the second most cited funding constraint, but any change could negatively impact districts with fewer or no CTE programs.

Fifty-three percent of survey respondents identified the Public School Support Program's disregard for CTE's smaller class sizes as a significant funding constraint, the second-most-cited constraint after equipment and facility costs. Because support units are calculated from average daily attendance, a CTE course capped at a smaller enrollment for safety and equipment reasons generates fewer support units. This means less state funding than a full-size academic class taught by the same teacher, even though the per-student cost of delivering the CTE course is often higher. As we previously discussed, enrollment caps on hands-on CTE courses are standard national practice rather than an Idaho-specific inefficiency.

The Legislature could address this mismatch by building a CTE-specific adjustment into the support unit calculation. For example, CTE enrollments could be separated into a distinct support unit calculation as the funding formula currently does for kindergarten, special education, and alternative schools. This would allow the smaller class sizes that CTE safety and equipment requirements already impose. This practice would bring Idaho in line with two neighboring states (Washington and Wyoming) that have similar cohort based education funding formulas.

There are several things to note with a new support unit formula. An increase in support units for an LEA would lead to an increase in appropriated teachers, classified staff, and administrators. This change would require an additional level of financial support from the legislature to account for the larger number of appropriated FTE positions at LEAs.

Second, because the discretionary portion of Public School Support Program operates on a largely fixed pool of funding divided out equally by support unit, any adjustment that raises the support units generated by CTE courses will lower the discretionary funding per support unit available elsewhere in the formula.

Without a corresponding increase in discretionary funding, an LEA with fewer or no CTE programs would likely see a reduction in discretionary support from the state.

Next, a decision would need to be made as to whether to remove students counted in the CTE support unit formula from an LEA's base support unit formula or allow those students to be counted twice, once for the base support unit formula and again for the CTE support unit formula. The former is the current practice within Idaho, with students counted in the exceptional education support unit formula for special education not being counted for base support units. The latter would bring Idaho in line with states like Washington and Wyoming where CTE funding is in addition to base education funding.

Last, as previously discussed, CTE courses often have lower student counts for safety reasons and equipment limitations, specifically in hands-on courses in shops and labs. A CTE specific support unit formula could create an incentive for LEAs to structure course rosters around the funding threshold rather than instructional need or safety concerns. Guidance from IDCTE or the State Board of Education on caps on student counts within specific CTE courses could alleviate this concern.

Two of Idaho's regional neighbors offer templates for reforming the Occupational Specialist route.

Our survey identified certification as a recruiting barrier, named by 32 percent of respondents. Idaho's entry-level Limited Occupational Specialist (LOS) certificate is both non-renewable after three years and among the lowest-paid credentials a CTE teacher can hold. Board of Education Rules governing the Occupational Specialist credential route (IDAPA 08.02.02.015.04.c) could be modified to alter the requirements to hold a LOS certificate. Utah and Washington illustrate two different ways to restructure that entry point.

Utah attaches a fixed, quantified requirement to each endorsement.

Idaho licenses CTE teachers through many specific, named endorsements, rather than a single generic credential across all six program areas. State Board of Education policy currently recognizes 66 distinct occupational endorsements, 58 of which are industry endorsements and 8 are degree-based endorsements, each attached to a teacher's certificate. Utah recognizes a higher number of endorsements, but the primary difference between the two states is not how many pathways each names, but how specifically each pathway's requirements are defined.

For most of Idaho's CTE endorsements, the qualifying standard is a single, near-identically worded sentence that a candidate has industry experience that indicates applied competence, with no fixed number of years, hours, or credits specified. Eligibility of a candidate is determined by IDCTE case by case. About a fifth of the endorsements add a harder floor; the instructor must also hold a specific, currently valid Idaho occupational license (e.g., a registered nursing license for Nursing Assistant, an electrician's license for Electrical Technology). Even these endorsements stop short of specifying additional teaching-relevant experience beyond the license itself.

Utah's equivalent requirement is a fixed rule rather than a qualitative standard: an industry professional without a bachelor's degree must document six years of related occupational experience within the ten years before applying to a

CTE teacher preparation program (Utah Admin. Code R277-304-9). Each CTE endorsement is documented in its own separate specification sheet published by the state board. These specification sheets outline the requirements of each CTE endorsement, such as the industry, experience, and education or specific college-level courses. Moreover, the specification sheets outline the different requirements for the associate (entry level) and professional education license for each endorsement if applicable.⁵ Utah's model creates a low bar a candidate must meet for several non-technical endorsements, with some endorsements only requiring an online certificate or a specific college course to be taken in order to qualify as an associate level teacher.

Applied to Idaho, a Utah-style reform would mean including a specific, codified experience or competency threshold to the 58 industry endorsements Idaho already recognizes. This could have varying impacts on recruitment. Our survey found that certification complexity is itself a cited barrier. Some of the complexity may be that candidates and LEAs cannot know in advance what a case-by-case review will require. A fixed, published threshold could make the requirement more predictable.

But if an endorsement threshold were set at Utah's level, it would also formalize a higher bar that some candidates approved under the present standard would not be able to meet. It could also be more difficult for the small, rural districts which already struggle to find a single qualified candidate for a given endorsement. Idaho's discretionary standard, unlike a fixed rule, at least leaves room for a district to make the case for a nonstandard candidate.

Washington lets a district hire before certification is complete.

Washington's current certification chart lists 81 active vocational codes (V-codes) across seven program areas: Skilled and Technical Sciences, Family and Consumer Sciences, Business and Marketing, Health Sciences, Agriculture Education, Technology Education, and Worksite Learning.

Washington reaches these V-codes through two routes. CTE Plan 1 is the University/College Route and requires a bachelor's degree, an approved teacher preparation program, content and basic skills testing, and 2,000 hours of non-teaching occupational experience in the past ten years. This is the route into

5. Several endorsements that have high barriers of entry do not have associate level education licenses available, such as the nurse assistant endorsement which requires an active Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse license.

four broad, degree-based areas (Agriculture, Business and Marketing, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Technology Education). CTE Plan 2, the Business and Industry Route, requires no bachelor's degree, 6,000 hours of verified occupational experience specific to each V-code requested, and covers the remaining 75 specialty V-codes.

Applied to Idaho, a Washington-style threshold would still mean essentially the same reform as the Utah option above; a fixed number in place of Idaho's qualitative "applied competence" standard, but one closer to Idaho's current practice.

Washington's more distinctive feature is when a candidate may begin teaching. Its Conditional CTE Certificate, a two-year certificate that a hiring district initiates on behalf of a qualified industry professional, allows a candidate into the classroom immediately. The full Plan 2 hours are verified over time (WAC 181-77-014), rather than requiring all 6,000 hours to be verified in advance. A district may utilize this certificate if it is unable to hire a certified teacher for a CTE program. A teacher on a Conditional CTE Certificate must have a written training plan developed in coordination with the CTE administrator and CTE advisory committee. The Conditional CTE Certificate is renewable after two years if the teacher completes at least 50 hours of continuing education. When applying for a credential under Plan 2, a teacher may use up to 4,000 hours of education experience to meet the 6,000-hour industry requirement.

Applied to Idaho, this would allow a candidate to begin teaching while completing the required credential hours for a Limited Occupational Specialist, rather than accruing the required hours prior to starting. This tracks closely with what survey respondents requested with easier alternative licensure (44 percent) and streamlined certification for industry professionals (36 percent).

The trade-off is that broader, faster entry does not entirely resolve why entrants leave. Our credential-pay data shows that Idaho's entry-level credentials, the LOS and the Content Specialist alternative authorization, are already the lowest-paid credentials. Simplifying entry without addressing that pay gap could increase the number of new candidates without improving how many candidates stay. Additionally, loosening entry requirements also carries a legitimate concern about the preparation a fast-tracked entrant receives before taking over a classroom. Exhibit 35 provides an overview of the different entry-level CTE credentials available to industry professionals in Idaho, Utah, and Washington.

Exhibit 35

Entry-level CTE credentials for industry professionals in Utah and Washington can be used as a guide to changing Idaho's credential requirements.

	Idaho (current)	Utah	Washington
Entry credential	Limited Occupational Specialist (LOS)	Associate Educator License / CTE endorsement	Conditional CTE Certificate
Named endorsements/ pathways	66, 58 industry endorsements and 8 degree-based endorsements	87	81
Requirement specificity	Qualitative (“applied competence”); no fixed years/hours for most endorsements but candidate must have either 6,000 hours industry experience, 2,000 hours plus bachelor’s degree, or industry certification for LOS credential	Quantified: 6 years of experience within prior 10 years if candidate holds no bachelor’s degree, plus per-endorsement specification sheet	Must have industry experience and a written training plan developed in coordination with the CTE administrator and CTE advisory committee
Entry credential renewability	Non-renewable after three years	Associate license extendable up to two additional years	May be renewed after two years if the teacher completes at least 50 hours of continuing education
Who initiates entry	Candidate	Candidate, via approved preparation program	Hiring district, on candidate’s behalf

Sources: Idaho data from Chapter 5; Utah Admin. Code R277-301, R277-304-9; Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 181-77, Washington OSPI CTE Teacher Certification guidance.

Targeting pay increases to the credentials and program areas with the widest private-sector wage gaps would more directly address recruitment than an across-the-board raise, at the cost of creating pay differences within the CTE teaching corps itself.

House Bill 849 (2026) already responds to one part of Idaho's CTE compensation problem. Our analysis found that the CTE entry-rung premium compresses to near zero by the Professional and Advanced Professional rungs, and HB 849 shortens the evaluation wait before a CTE teacher can advance past that compression point.

HB 849 does not address the pay compression at the top of the teacher career ladder, often impacting teachers with the Advanced Occupational Specialist credential. We also found that the private-sector wage gap is not uniform across program areas: Health Professions, Engineering and Technology, and the higher-skill trades face a substantially larger gap to industry pay, particularly at the 75th percentile, than Agriculture or Family and Consumer Sciences do.

Rather than raising CTE pay uniformly, the Legislature could scale an apportionment, such as an expansion of the existing \$3,000 occupational specialist apportionment, to the size of the private-sector wage gap in a teacher's specific program area or increase the additional funds specifically to higher-level Occupational Specialists. The first option would concentrate new spending on program areas that IDCTE needs assessment and our wage analysis identify as hardest to staff, rather than spreading it evenly across program areas that do not face the same private-sector competition. The second option would potentially incentivize long-term CTE teachers to stay teaching in Idaho as opposed to leaving for higher wages in the private sector.

The trade-off is internal equity. A program-area-specific differential means two CTE teachers on the same career-ladder rung would be paid differently based on what they teach, not their experience or performance. This could be difficult to justify to teachers in lower-paid program areas and may require a change to the career ladder's statutory structure rather than administrative rule alone. It is also an ongoing cost that scales with enrollment in the highest-gap program areas, rather than a one-time or capped expenditure. It also brings up an equity issue between CTE and non-CTE teachers: should long-term career teachers in non-CTE areas that teach critical core subject areas be systematically paid less than their CTE counterparts?



Regional staffing arrangements could extend high-cost program areas to small districts that cannot support them alone, though they do not replace the need for a qualified teacher willing to take the position.

We found that Idaho's smallest support group districts, those in Group 4, offer approved programs in real depth only in Agriculture and Business and Marketing. Engineering and Technology, Health Professions, and Trades and Industry collectively make up only a small amount of Group 4's approved programs. Our teacher-level data backs this conclusion. Group 4 districts employed only six Engineering and Technology teachers and two Health Professions teachers statewide across the three school years covered by this report.

Idaho already applies a pooled-resource model to CTE funding. Perkins V allows LEAs that cannot meet the federal per-LEA funding threshold on their own to form a regional consortium. A similar model applied to staffing, such as a shared or itinerant CTE teacher serving multiple small districts in a region, or a regional CTE cooperative modeled on the existing career technical center structure, could extend high-cost program areas to districts that cannot justify a full-time position alone. IDCTE-supported virtual or hybrid delivery for the classroom-based portion of a pathway, paired with a locally supervised lab or clinical component, is a second option for content areas where a live instructor is not available in a region.

Neither approach solves the underlying staffing problem by itself. A shared teacher model still requires finding a qualified candidate willing to split time or travel across multiple districts, and coordinating contracts, liability, and schedules across LEAs has proven difficult wherever it has been tried. Virtual or hybrid delivery is a weaker fit for CTE's hands-on, industry-aligned instruction, particularly for Health Professions clinical requirements and Trades shop work. This option would need to be paired with local equipment and supervision that many Group 4 districts are least equipped to provide.

A shared teacher model still requires finding a qualified candidate willing to split time or travel across multiple districts.

Policy options address different parts of the same issues, and several are more effective in combination than alone.

A funding change that lets LEAs pay competitive salaries will not help a district that cannot find a licensed candidate to hire. A credentialing change that broadens the applicant pool will not improve retention if entry-level pay remains the lowest on the ladder and below industry wages. And a staffing arrangement that extends a program area to a small district still depends on the compensation and credentialing barriers above being addressed enough that someone is willing to fill the position. Exhibit 36 summarizes the options above, the specific problem each addresses, precedent from other states where one exists, and its primary trade-off.

Exhibit 36

Summary of policy options, problems addressed, precedent, and primary trade-offs.

Policy option	Problem addressed	State precedent	Primary trade-off
Allow PACF to fund base salary	PACF, the largest CTE funding stream, cannot pay base instructional salary	Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington	Redirects existing funds away from equipment and facilities without any new appropriation
Add a CTE class-size adjustment to the Public School Support Program	Formula funds CTE classes as if they were full-size academic classes	Washington and Wyoming	Redistributes support units elsewhere without new appropriation; harder to administer

Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

Policy option	Problem addressed	State precedent	Primary trade-off
Utah-style pathway-specific endorsements	Generic ladder does not verify pathway-specific expertise	Utah (R277-304-9)	Could potentially increase entry requirement in some program areas; opposite of survey respondents' stated preference for easier access
Washington-style renewable/simplified entry certificate	LOS certificate has higher barriers and is non-renewable after 3 years	Washington (WAC 181-77)	Does not fix entry-level pay issue; faster entry may mean faster exit
Scale the occupational specialist apportionment to program-area wage gap	Teacher to industry pay gap is widest in Health, Engineering, Trades	None identified	Creates pay differences among CTE teachers by program area, not experience
Increase additional state apportionment for holders of the Advanced Occupational Specialist license	The current additional funding for occupational specialists from the state is flat regardless occupational specialist type	None identified	Is not targeted toward specific program areas that have the highest average salaries or most private sector pull
Regional/shared CTE staffing or hybrid delivery	Group 4 districts offer almost no Engineering or Health programs	Existing Perkins V consortium model	Complex logistics of shared contracts/schedules; weaker fit for hands-on instruction

A

Study request

DISTRICT 29
BANNOCK COUNTY



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Idaho State Senate

SENATOR JAMES D. RUCHTI
Assistant Minority Leader

Dear Joint Legislative Oversight Committee,

We are requesting a study for a pressing issue facing Idaho's public schools, including public charter schools: the recruitment and retention of career technical education (CTE) personnel and a possible change in funding legislation that will allow districts flexibility with CTE district appropriations to fund salaries for CTE instructional staff. This matter directly impacts Idaho's ability to meet the growing demand for CTE pathways among high school students and address the workforce needs of our state.

The Problem

Idaho's public schools face significant barriers in hiring and retaining qualified career technical educators. Many potential candidates must leave well-compensated private-sector careers to pursue these positions, creating a financial disincentive. This challenge severely limits the pool of available professionals and the scope of CTE programs schools can offer to students.

As demonstrated in the reduction of state support for certified staff FTE (full time equivalency) state-wide, declining enrollment is a dilemma faced by many districts across Idaho. CTE programs, by design, have class sizes that accommodate fewer learners in a "work experience" setting. Unfortunately, when districts are faced with the challenge of reducing FTE to meet budget restrictions, it is imperative that the FTE in core classes be maintained over the smaller class sizes in CTE programs. Consequently, CTE classes and programs along with other elective programs are sacrificed in order to balance staffing (FTE) to state supported revenue.

Despite recent historic investments in Idaho public school facilities through House Bill 521 and Superintendent Critchfield's Career Ready Students program, including funding for CTE programs, existing statutory provisions and revenue flows do not provide adequate flexibility to address these staffing challenges.

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
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The Magnitude of the Problem

The effects of this issue are far-reaching:

- 1) Stakeholders affected: Thousands of Idaho high school students who seek to gain trade skills for employment upon graduation; and
- 2) Workforce implications: A reduced ability to prepare students for high-demand technical careers, hindering Idaho's economic growth; and
- 3) Unintended consequences: Underutilization of CTE facilities and programs due to insufficient staffing, limiting student access to vital educational pathways.

Desired Information

To address this issue effectively, we request the following:

- 1) An analysis of the cost implications of additional revenue streams for hiring, retaining and funding CTE personnel. Specifically relating to, [Allowable Uses of Added Cost Funds](#) document (item 3.c.1.).
- 2) A comprehensive cost-benefit comparison of potential policy alternatives, including adjustments to Idaho Code provisions to allow greater latitude in funding sources.
- 3) An evaluation of program impact, including the number of students served and workforce outcomes.
- 4) Stakeholder perceptions, including feedback from educators, students, and industry
- 5) partners, on barriers to and opportunities for improving CTE pathways.

Proposed Next Steps

To facilitate informed decision-making, I urge the Idaho Legislature to direct the Office of Performance Evaluation to study all available options for additional funding resources and/or flexibility for Idaho public schools to utilize state and federal CTE funding. This study should provide actionable recommendations to:

- 1) Increase compensation options for CTE personnel to attract and retain qualified Educators; and
- 2) Expand flexibility in the application of any existing statutory provisions or Idaho CTE policies/procedures/guidelines to meet staffing needs; and
- 3) Ensure alignment of funding mechanisms with Idaho's workforce development goals.

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Anticipated Use of the Report

This report will serve as a critical tool to:

- 1) Inform policy decisions that support Idaho's CTE educators and students.; and
- 2) Educate stakeholders, including legislators, school boards, educators, and industry partners, on the importance of addressing this issue.; and
- 3) Provide accountability for ensuring that state and federal CTE investments yield tangible benefits for students and the workforce.

In conclusion, Idaho's students deserve access to robust CTE programs that prepare them for meaningful careers. Addressing the barriers to recruiting, retaining and provide ongoing salary funding support outside of the traditional FTE funding model is essential to achieving this goal. I respectfully urge your support in advocating for greater latitude and flexibility in CTE personnel funding.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and am happy to provide further information or assistance as needed.



Senator James D. Ruchti
Assistant Minority Leader
District 29



Representative Dan Garner
District 28

B

Scope

This evaluation will focus on the following objectives:

Provide an overview of career technical education programs offered in Idaho public secondary schools and CTE funding mechanisms, including factors that impact CTE offerings such as local education agency size, location, or setting;

Examine CTE instructor recruitment, retention, and staffing challenges faced by local education agencies;

Compare tradeoffs of potential policy alternatives, such as statutory changes or increased flexibility in funding sources, and their fiscal implications for local education agencies;

Compare Idaho's CTE personnel funding and flexibility to approaches used in other states; and,

Identify practices that may improve consistency, sustainability, or effectiveness of CTE staffing within Idaho's existing governance and funding structures.



Methods

This study relies on data from the following main sources:

Teacher salary and credential data. We used three years (2024–2026 school years) of Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) certified staff records to build a teacher- and course-level dataset of secondary CTE and non-CTE salaries, career ladder placement, FTE, and credential type. We matched each teacher’s course assignments to the IDCTE Assignment Credential Manual to identify CTE program area.

CTE funding data. We obtained IDCTE distribution data for CTE programs to determine how CTE funding is distributed and whether current funding mechanisms can be used to support teacher salaries. We compared Idaho’s CTE funding formula and permitted uses of funds against those of six neighboring western states.

Private-sector wage data. We used the US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program, May 2025 Idaho estimates, to benchmark CTE teacher pay against the median and 75th-percentile wages of the industry occupations that each CTE program area and course trains toward.

Stakeholder surveys. We fielded a Teacher Recruitment and Retention survey of local education agency (LEA) CTE contacts addressing recruiting difficulty, turnover, and compensation competitiveness, and a second survey looking at CTE programming and funding.

Document and legislative review. We reviewed Idaho statute and State Board of Education rule governing CTE funding and educator credentialing, IDCTE program materials describing routes into CTE teaching, and House Bill 849 (2026), which amended career ladder advancement for CTE teachers effective July 1, 2026.

For other state comparisons we reviewed statutes and documents produced by each state’s respective departments of education from Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

CTE staff survey

We conducted two surveys of CTE staff to gain perspective of CTE programming and staffing from LEA. The first study looked at questions related to staffing and teacher recruitment. The second survey was a broader look at CTE programming and funding.

We obtained a list of Local Education Agency (LEA) contacts from IDCTE for our survey populations. In total, there were 231 individuals from 124 different LEAs. These individuals held various job titles, such as teachers, superintendents, principals, business managers, CTE directors, and charter school administrators. For several LEAs we received contacts for multiple individuals.

For our first survey on CTE teacher recruitment and retention we received 128 responses from 92 total LEAs. Our second survey on CTE programming and funding received 88 responses from 71 total LEAs.

Teacher salary data

We received secondary teacher salary data for the 2024, 2025, and 2026 school years from the Board of Education's ISEE data system. This included all teachers who teach at an Idaho public middle school, junior high, high school, or charter school which serves students from 7th through 12th grade. In total, we received 65,877 entries across the three years, which translates to just under 22,000 entries per year.

We received salary, contract information, and career ladder placement for all secondary teachers. Many teachers have multiple contracts with an LEA, with one contract for teaching duties and another for administrative work. We excluded salary from administrative work from our salary analysis, as the purpose of the analysis was to compare CTE teacher to non-CTE teacher salaries, not total compensation. Removing administrative contracts eliminated about 10,000 entries for teachers who had their entire FTE assigned to an administrative contract, reducing the number of teacher entries to 55,784 in our dataset. We also excluded additional salary that a teacher may receive from performing additional duties beyond the normal scope of the school year, such as summer school or athletic coaching assignments. Exhibit 37 shows the total number of teachers in our data set per year and the number of CTE and non-CTE teachers per year.

Exhibit 37

Just under six percent of teachers taught CTE courses.

School year	Total secondary teacher count	CTE teacher count	Non-CTE teacher count
2024	18,801	1,019	17,782
2025	18,526	1,067	17,459
2026	18,457	1,065	17,392
All years	55,784	3,151	52,633

Source: OPE analysis of ISEE data.

For simplicity and because of changes to the number of steps of the Professional rung of the career ladder, we grouped teachers by their placement type on the career ladder (Resident, Professional, and Advanced Professional) and not each individual step on each rung of the ladder.

For CTE teachers, we also received what type of endorsement and credentials the teacher holds, as well as any class assignments a CTE teacher taught in the three school years. The class assignments allowed us to group CTE teachers by CTE program area. We used the highest-ranking class assignment for a CTE teacher and cross-referenced it to the CTE Assignment Credential Manual to assign what program area the CTE teacher primarily teaches in. We counted CTE teachers who taught middle school CTE exploratory courses as CTE teachers but they remained unassigned to the six designated CTE program areas. Exhibit 38 shows the number of CTE teachers assigned to each program area.

Exhibit 38

Business and Marketing Education had the highest teacher count.

Program area	CTE teacher count	Percentage share of all CTE teachers
Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	583	19%
Business and Marketing Education	657	21%
Engineering and Technology Education	425	13%
Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services	481	15%

Program area	CTE teacher count	Percentage share of all CTE teachers
Health Professions and Public Safety	387	12%
Trades and Industry	491	16%

Note: percentages do not add to 100 percent due to unassigned courses. **Source:** OPE analysis of ISEE data.

Most CTE and non-CTE teachers had a 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching assignment across the three school years. As shown in exhibit 39, CTE teachers were less likely to have a 1.0 FTE teaching assignment (89 percent) than non-CTE teachers (95 percent). Some of the 11 percent non-full time teachers were full-time when factoring in an additional contract for administrative work. However, we excluded salary from administrative work to better compare teacher salaries. For teachers below a 1.0 FTE we adjusted their salary to a 1.0 FTE equivalent. For example, a teacher making \$25,000 on a 0.5 FTE contract would be considered making \$50,000 on a 1.0 FTE contract for our comparison purposes.

Exhibit 39

CTE teachers were more likely to work part-time than non-CTE teachers.

School year	CTE Teachers at least 1.0 FTE count		Non-CTE Teachers at least 1.0 FTE count	
2024 school year	938	92%	16,736	94%
2025 school year	930	87%	16,578	95%
2026 school year	928	87%	16,562	95%
All years	2,796	89%	49,876	95%

Source: OPE analysis of ISEE data.

It could be posited that since CTE teachers were more likely to be part-time than their non-CTE counterparts, and since CTE teachers are teaching specialized one-off classes, that salary data for CTE teachers may be partially inflated when we adjust all salaries to 1.0 FTE. Essentially, it might be easier to offer a CTE teacher a higher part-time salary to teach one or two courses where the LEA could not afford to offer the equivalent full-time salary. For example, offering an engineering CTE teacher \$20,000 on a 0.25 FTE contract could be more feasible financially than offering that same teacher \$80,000 on a 1.0 FTE contract.

However, when we exclude part-time teachers from our analysis and solely focus on full-time teachers the gap between CTE and non-CTE salaries increases rather than shrinks (exhibit 40). Therefore, our inclusion of part-time salary data likely underestimates the salary differences between full-time CTE and non-CTE teachers.

Exhibit 40

The increase in CTE teacher pay grows when excluding part-time teachers.

School year	CTE Mean Salary (all)	Non-CTE Mean salary (all)	All Gap (percentage)	CTE Mean Salary (1.0 FTE)	Non-CTE Mean salary (1.0 FTE)	Gap (percentage)
2024 school year	\$61,438	\$60,661	\$777 (1.3%)	\$61,651	\$61,073	\$578 (0.9%)
2025 school year	\$63,028	\$62,859	\$169 (0.3%)	\$63,853	\$63,147	\$706 (1.1%)
2026 school year	\$66,550	\$66,250	\$299 (0.5%)	\$67,003	\$66,430	\$573 (0.9%)
All years	\$63,704	\$63,237	\$467 (0.7%)	\$64,160	\$63,541	\$618 (1.0%)

Source: OPE analysis of ISEE data.

Teacher salary industry wage comparisons

In chapter 5 we compare CTE teacher wages by CTE course to those in similar industry fields in the state of Idaho. To determine CTE wages by course, we used course assignments for CTE teachers in the 2024–2026 school years. All class assignments were considered, and a CTE teacher can be represented in multiple class assignments if they taught multiple CTE courses in a given year (this is in contrast to the assignment of CTE teachers to program areas in the report, where we allocate CTE teachers to their primary teaching program area).

We used Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) May 2025 report for industry wages. We identified similar professions to CTE courses for wage comparisons. Exhibit 41 below shows the full breadth of wage comparisons made by courses.

Exhibit 41

Competitiveness with industry wages varied by course and program.

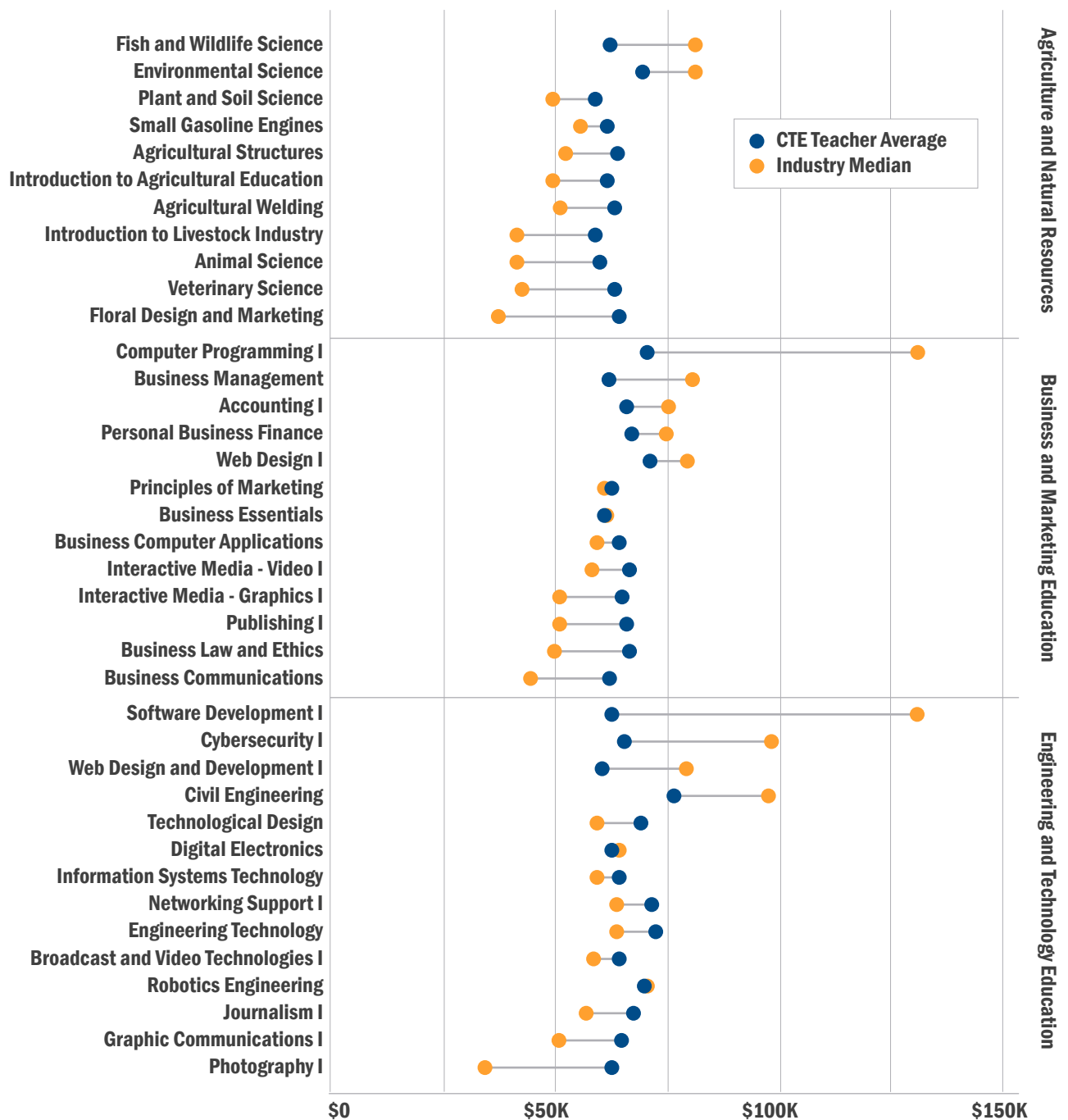
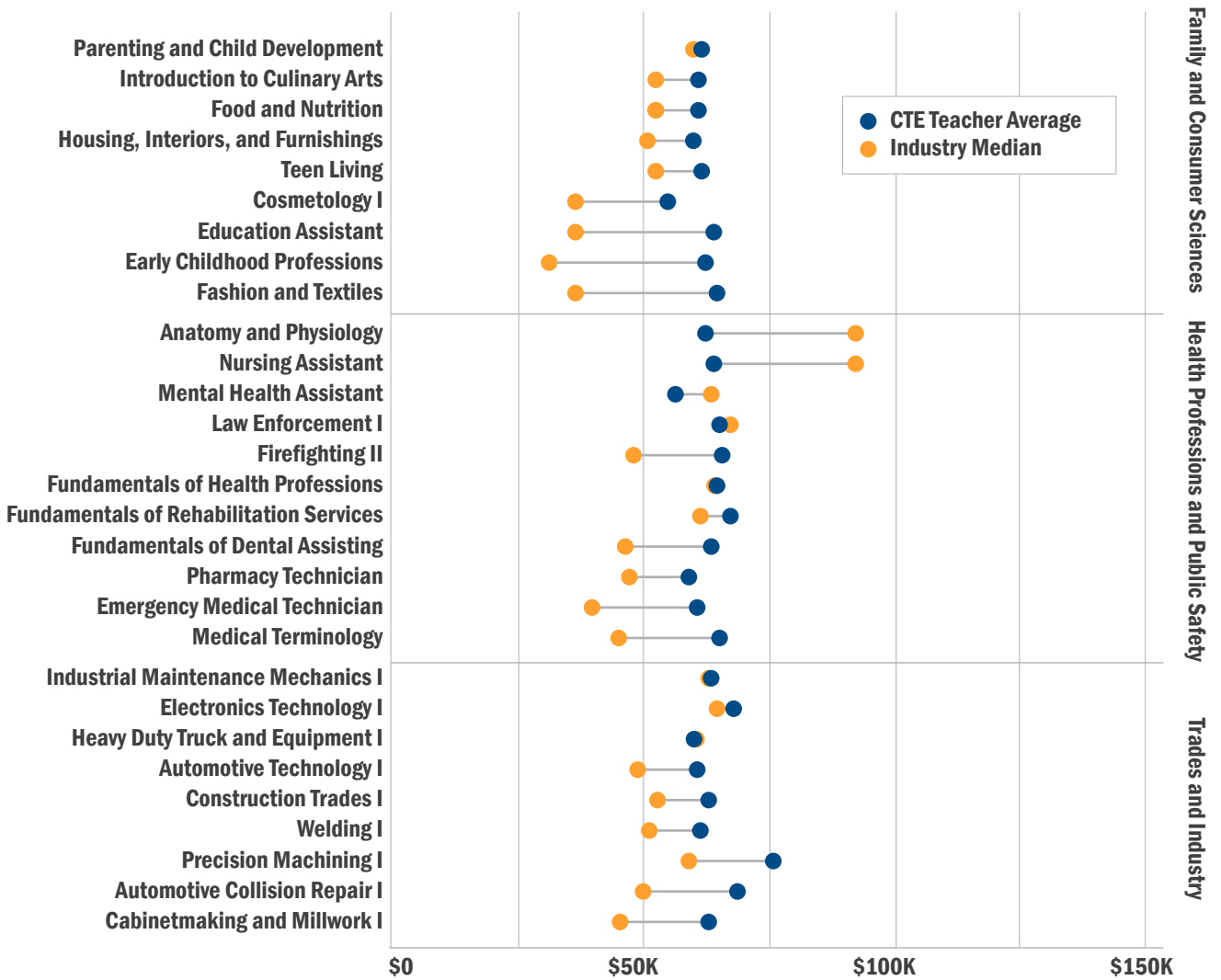


Exhibit 41 (continued)

Competitiveness with industry wages varied by course and program.



Note: Course level teacher means rest on smaller samples than program area averages and should be read as indicative for low-headcount courses. The same contract-length and benefits caveats noted above apply. Sources: BLS OEWS May 2025 (Idaho); course-level ISEE/OPE salary analysis; IDCTE 2024-25 Assignment Credential Manual.



Program by LEA

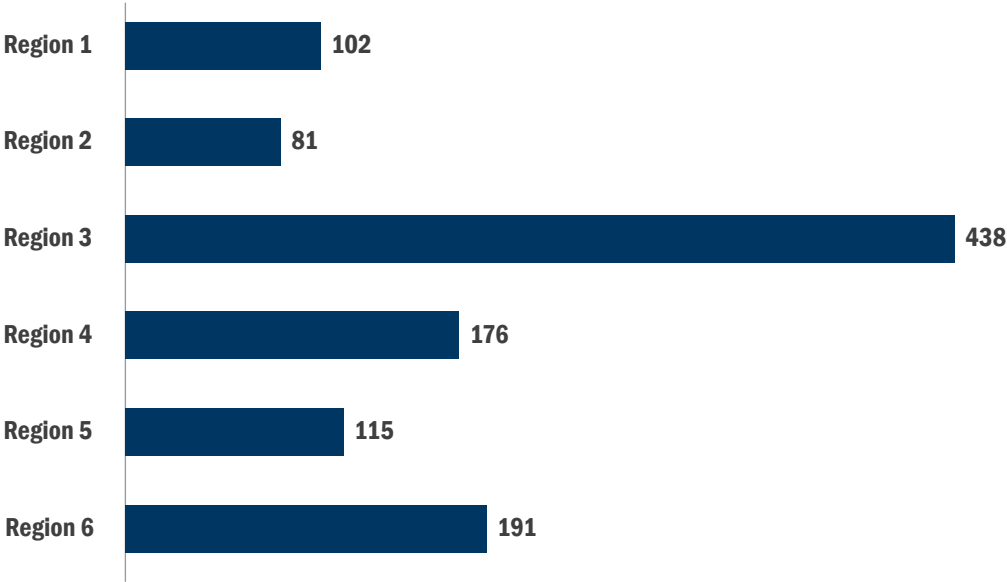
Characteristics

Education Region 3 offers the most CTE programs with the most diversity in program type.

Region 3 (Southwest Idaho) offers the most CTE programs in the state (exhibit 42). The increase of CTE in Region 3 is likely because of the general population of the Boise Metropolitan Area, which makes up about 42 percent of district enrollment statewide. The two regions that make up Northern Idaho (Regions 1 and 2) offer the fewest CTE programs of the six regions, though these regions also have the smallest enrollments of the education regions.

Exhibit 42

Approved secondary CTE programs by education region.

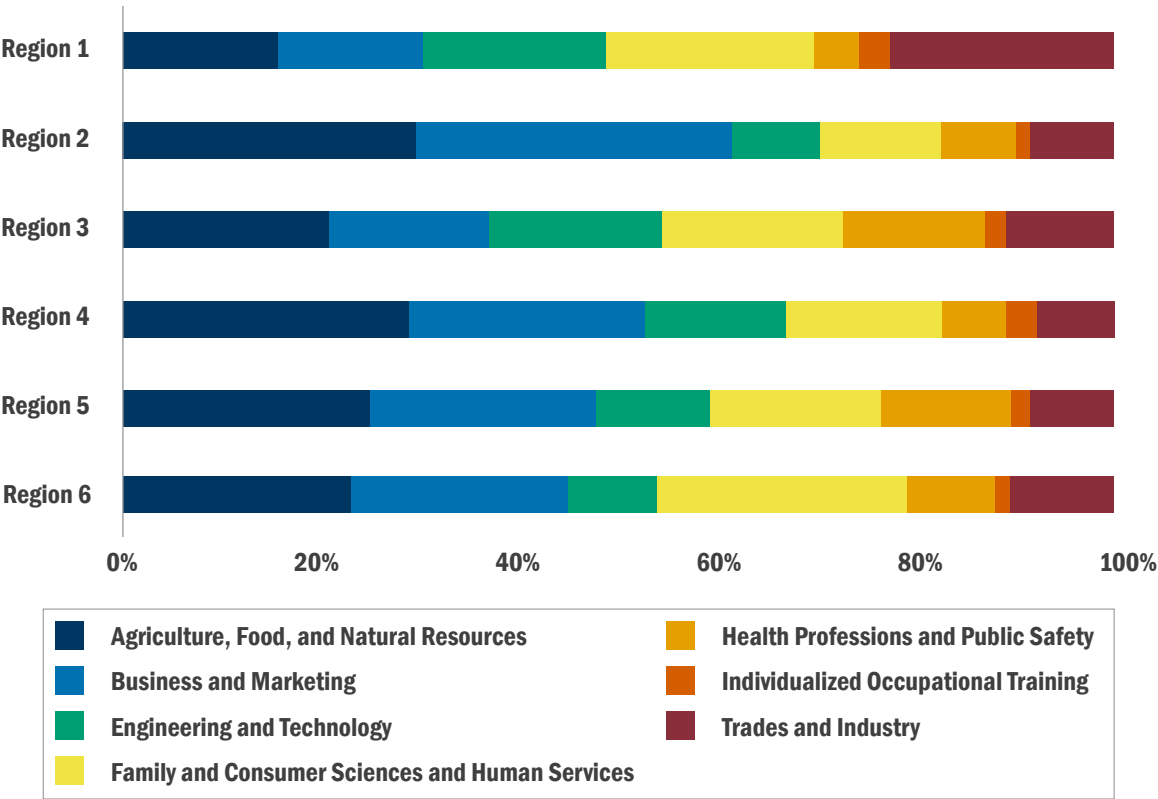


Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

All six regions offer CTE programs in the six different program areas and Individualized Occupational Training (exhibit 43). There is slight variance between the regions when looking at the percentage of programs offered in each program area. Region 1 has a large percentage of programs in Trades and Industry (23 percent) and is the only region with less than 20 percent of programs in the agriculture program area (16 percent). Region 2 has the highest percentage of programs in both the Agriculture (30 percent) and Business and Marketing Education (32 percent) program areas of all regions.

Exhibit 43

Approved secondary CTE programs by education region and program area, percent of region total.



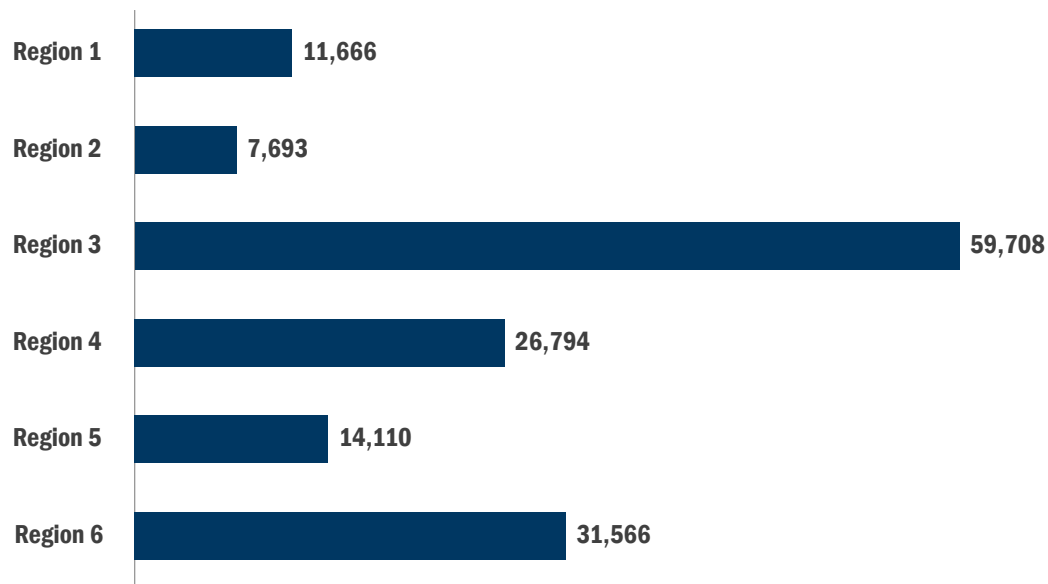
Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

Some region-by-program-area combinations involve very small counts. For example, Health Professions and Public Safety offerings in Region 1 and Region 2 each number only a handful of programs so the regional program area mix is best read as directional rather than precise.

Enrollment is even more concentrated than program counts. Across the 125 reporting LEAs, CTE course enrollments total roughly 151,500, and the Southwest region accounts for about 59,700 of them, nearly 40 percent of statewide enrollment (exhibit 44).

Exhibit 44

CTE course enrollments by education region.



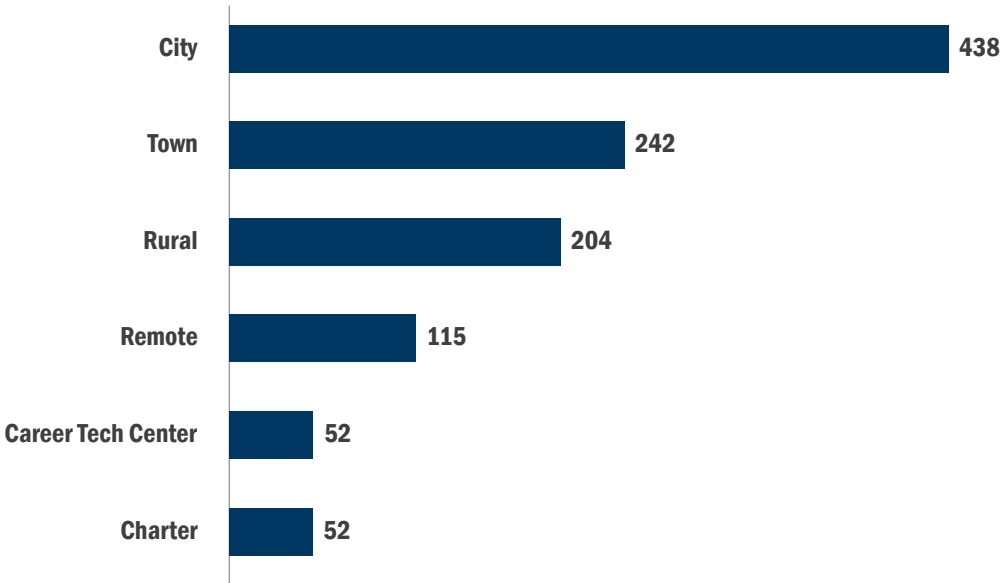
Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE enrollment data.

City Districts offer the most CTE programs and the most evenly distributed program types.

When looking at the number of courses by district setting, we find that City districts, making up 15 of the 125 included LEAs, house 438 of the 1,103 approved programs (exhibit 45).

Exhibit 45

Approved secondary CTE programs by LEA setting.



Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

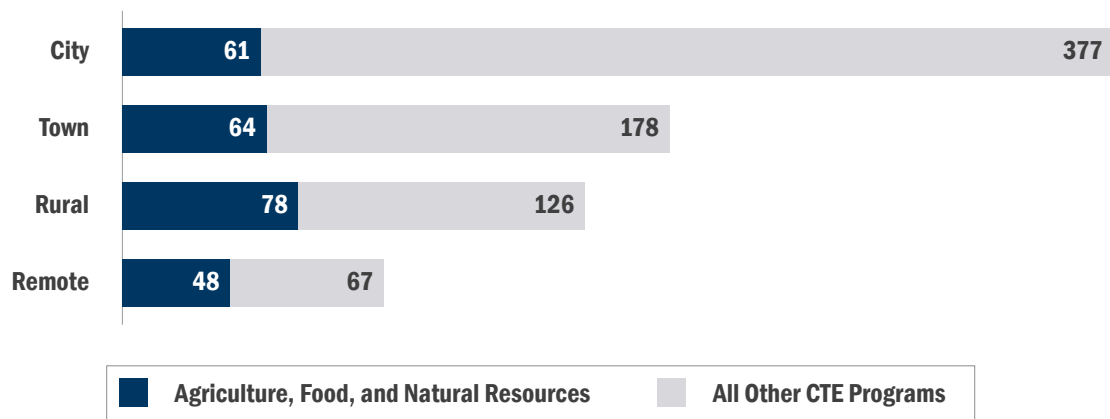
Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

We found that there are differences in the types of CTE courses offered between LEAs in different settings. Despite offering the most CTE programs in the state, City districts offered fewer programs within the Agriculture program area (61 programs) than the Town (64 programs) and Rural (78 programs) districts (exhibit 46).

Inversely, City districts offered more programs in the other six CTE program areas than any other setting type and made up nearly half of all offerings statewide in the Engineering and Technology, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Health Profession program areas.

Exhibit 46

Approved secondary CTE programs by LEA setting and program area.

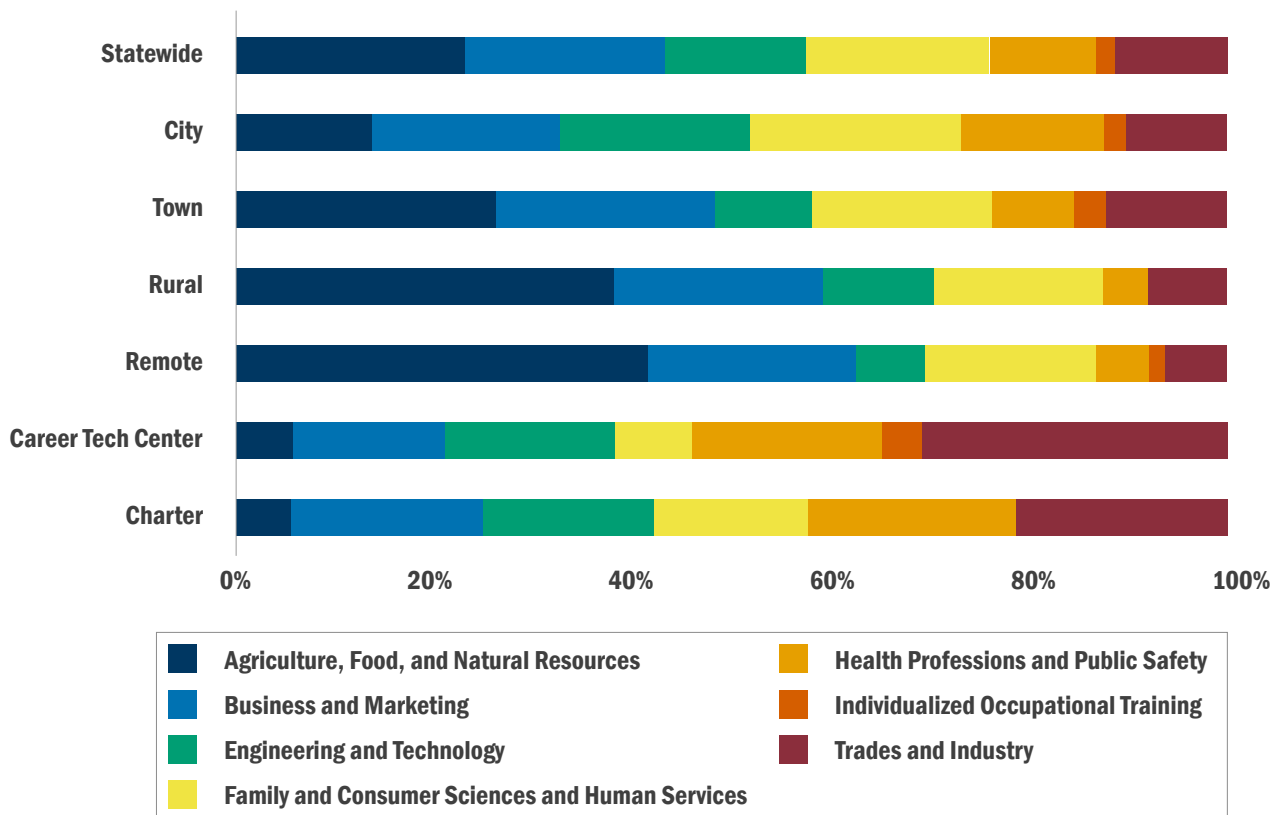


Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

When looking at the percentage of CTE offerings by setting, we found that Town, Rural and Remote districts offered proportionately more agriculture CTE programs than the other CTE program areas. Career Technical Centers had an increased offering of Health Profession and Trades and Industry programs, and City district offerings were more evenly distributed among the CTE program areas (exhibit 47).

Exhibit 47

Approved secondary CTE programs by LEA setting and program area, percent of setting total.



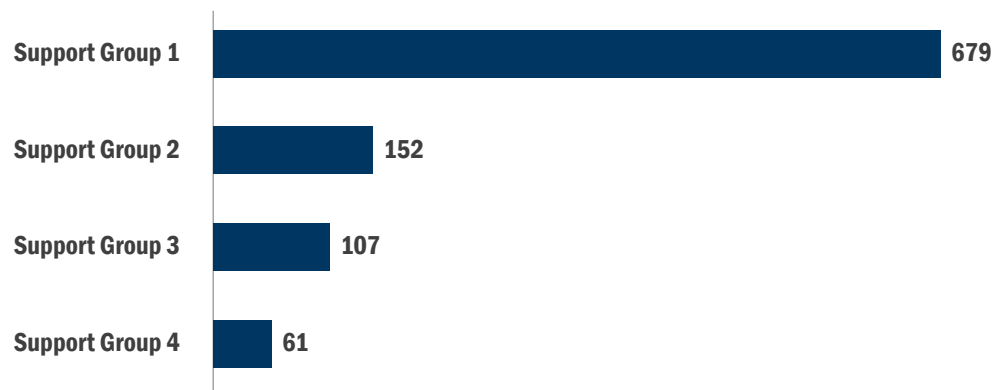
Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

District size shapes both the volume and the mix of CTE programs a district can offer.

Idaho assigns districts to support groups by size, with Group 1 the largest and Group 4 the smallest (charter schools and career technical centers are excluded from this analysis). Approved CTE programs fall off sharply with district size. Group 1 districts offer roughly 680 approved CTE programs, compared with about 150 in Group 2, about 105 in Group 3, and roughly 60 in Group 4 (exhibit 48).

Exhibit 48

Approved secondary CTE programs by district support group.



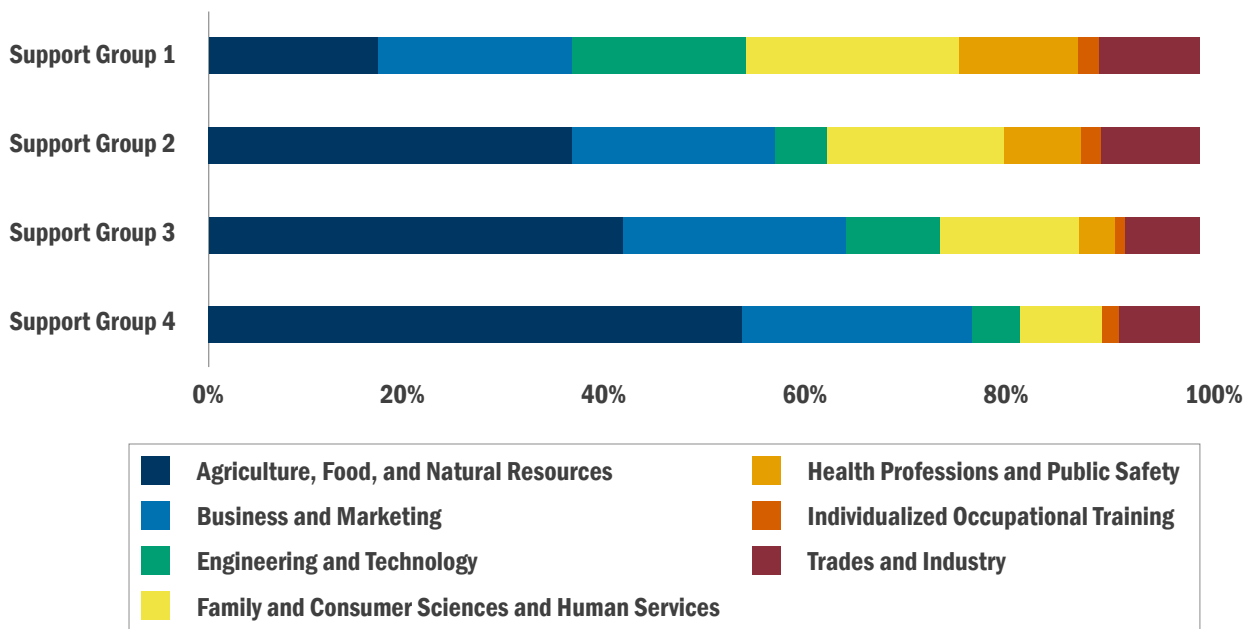
Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.

Group 1 districts offer a substantial number of programs in every program area, including roughly 120 each in Business and Marketing Education and in Engineering and Technology Education, about 145 in Family and Consumer Sciences and Human Services, and about 80 in Health Professions and Public Safety, alongside a sizable Trades and Industry presence. By Group 2, Engineering and Technology and Health Professions programs have both fallen to fewer than 20, even though the group still offers roughly 150 programs overall.

In Group 3 and Group 4 districts, this narrowing becomes concentration. Agriculture and Business and Marketing account for most of Group 4's roughly 60 approved programs, with Engineering and Technology, Health Professions, Trades and Industry, and Individualized Occupational Training collectively making up only a small remainder (exhibit 49). This pattern is consistent with the teacher-credential data discussed in Chapter 4. Over the three school years covered by this report, Group 4 districts employed only six Engineering and Technology teachers and two Health Professions teachers statewide, while 43 percent of Group 4's CTE teachers taught Agriculture, more than the share in any other district group. Smaller districts are not simply offering less CTE overall. They appear structurally unable to sustain the higher-cost, advanced equipment program areas, such as health labs and advanced engineering pathways, that larger districts can support.

Exhibit 49

Approved secondary CTE programs by district support group and program area, percent of group total.



Source: OPE analysis of IDCTE program data.



Responses to the evaluation



Governor Brad Little

State Capitol :: Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-2100 :: gov.idaho.gov

August 6, 2026

Ryan Langrill, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE)
954 W. Jefferson St.
Boise, ID 83702

Via e-mail: rlangrill@ope.idaho.gov

Dear Director Langrill,

Thank you for your office's thorough report on the challenges facing Idaho's public schools as they work to expand their offerings in Career Technical Education (CTE). I sincerely appreciate the depth of your team's analysis.

Growing CTE programs in our public schools is one of the most meaningful investments we can make in education. CTE programs connect students to career professionals and expose them to real-world career opportunities in some of Idaho's most in-demand fields. It is critical we take seriously the conclusions outlined in your team's report. The Idaho Division of Career Technical Education is already addressing some of these challenges, and I am pleased there is alignment between the legislative and executive branches on identifying potential solutions.

I look forward to working with legislators, the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, and other stakeholders to continue expanding access to CTE programs in Idaho's public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Little".

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho



August 6, 2026

Ryan Langrill, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho State Legislature

Re: Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

Dear Dr. Langrill:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to OPE's report titled, *Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding*. The Board appreciates the rigor and professionalism your office brought to this work. The report provides a valuable statewide picture of the opportunities Idaho's career technical education system offers students and the structural constraints that limit access.

The Board agrees with the report's central conclusion: Idaho's CTE programs are closely aligned with student and workforce needs, but their growth is constrained by the cost of specialized instruction, facilities and equipment, and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining qualified educators. These pressures are particularly acute in health professions, engineering and technology, and the skilled trades—the same areas in which Idaho communities and employers report significant workforce demand.

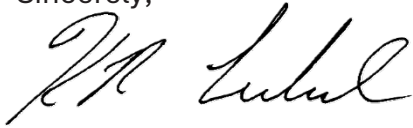
These challenges are interconnected. Funding flexibility alone will not resolve instructor shortages. Streamlined credentialing will not improve retention if compensation remains substantially below industry wages. And smaller or rural districts cannot independently sustain every high-cost program, even where student and workforce demand is clear. Meaningful progress will require coordinated action rather than a single policy response.

The Board has confidence in State Administrator Pete Risse and the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education team. Under Administrator Risse's leadership, the Division is addressing these challenges directly and making significant changes within its authority. That work includes rebuilding the Program Added Cost Fund distribution model around current program costs and workforce demand; providing no-cost alternative-authorization training; implementing a Board-approved teacher apprenticeship program; aligning endorsement requirements with program standards; improving and automating certification processing; strengthening mentoring for new instructors; and exploring regional staffing arrangements for programs smaller districts cannot sustain independently.

These efforts reflect the Board's expectation that the Division continually evaluate how existing resources, policies, and processes can better support students. The goal is not simply greater efficiency, but expanded access to rigorous, industry-aligned pathways leading to employment, further education, and economic opportunity throughout Idaho. Some of the report's options implicate the Board's rulemaking and policy authority, particularly those involving educator credentialing. The Board will work closely with Administrator Risse and his team to ensure that changes are timely, address demonstrated barriers, align with industry needs, can be implemented consistently, and improve the experience of educators and students.

We look forward to continuing our work with Administrator Risse, his team, and the Legislature to strengthen career technical education and expand opportunities for Idaho students.

Sincerely,



Kurt Liebich
President
Idaho State Board of Education



Jennifer White
Executive Director
Idaho State Board of Education

We prepare Idaho's youth and adults for high-skill, in-demand careers.



August 6, 2026

Dr. Ryan Langrill, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations, Idaho Legislature
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0055

Dear Dr. Langrill:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to *Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding*.

I want to begin by recognizing Casey Petti and the Office of Performance Evaluations staff. Throughout this evaluation, they asked thoughtful questions, worked carefully through funding and program data that do not lend themselves to easy comparison, and kept the Division informed of their progress. The report provides a clear picture of Idaho's secondary career technical education (CTE) system, and the Division is better positioned because of it.

The Division agrees with the report's central conclusions. That agreement reflects our own analysis and strategic planning. Our FY 2025 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, informed by stakeholders in all six education regions, independently reached the same two conclusions: Idaho's local CTE systems are well aligned with workforce demand, but they are constrained by capacity—particularly facilities and equipment, and the recruitment, retention, and credentialing of qualified educators. When an independent legislative evaluation and a statewide needs assessment identify the same constraints from different directions, policymakers can move forward with confidence.

These findings also reinforce concerns the Division has raised previously regarding the limits on CTE funding and the way Idaho's funding structure accounts for the smaller class sizes required in many CTE programs. OPE's independent analysis provides important confirmation that these are structural features of the system rather than isolated local concerns.

The report confirms an important reality: Idaho's challenge is not whether CTE aligns with industry needs. The challenge is whether the state has the capacity to deliver those programs at the scale students and employers require.

Funding structure

Program Added Cost Funds (PACF) reached 124 of the 126 local education agencies (LEAs) that received CTE funding in fiscal year 2026. At \$14.9 million of the \$24.6 million distributed through April, PACF remains the only dedicated funding stream with truly statewide reach. The report correctly notes that Idaho is unique among its neighboring states in prohibiting the use of these funds for base instructional salaries.

For legislative context, one of the six funding streams identified in the Executive Summary—approximately \$5.1 million in Perkins V funding in fiscal year 2025—is federal rather than state funding. State-dedicated CTE funding in that year was therefore closer to \$20 million. Distinguishing between state and federal sources helps clarify which policy levers are directly within the Legislature's control.

The Division is already redesigning the PACF distribution model for fiscal year 2027. That work will provide legislators with a distribution methodology that reflects both current program costs and workforce demand, supported by newly available data sources.

The report identifies Wyoming's block-grant model as one approach to providing districts with greater flexibility. Idaho already has experience with a similar framework. The Idaho Career Ready Students program, established through House Bill 267 (2023) and administered by the State Department of Education in



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partnership with IDCTE, provides competitive grants that districts and charter schools may use for facilities, equipment, and start-up costs—the very needs that a teacher-based funding model is not designed to address.

Although that program falls outside the funding streams examined in the evaluation, it demonstrates that Idaho already has a functioning model for flexible, locally driven investment in facilities, equipment, and program start-up costs—needs that cannot be addressed through teacher-based funding alone. More broadly, the Division supports greater flexibility for districts to braid state, federal, local, and private resources, provided that flexibility is paired with sufficient funding to make it meaningful.

Credentialing

Idaho currently recognizes 66 CTE endorsements, 58 of which are industry based, and three of the state's four entry pathways exist specifically to bring experienced professionals into the classroom. The report's finding that entry-level credential holders receive the lowest average pay highlights a structural challenge at precisely the point where recruitment succeeds or fails. Add to that the gap between the wage rates achievable in industry in comparison to the classroom, and the problem is compounded further.

Within its existing authority, the Division has already implemented several reforms:

- launched free, in-house alternative authorization training that allows educators to begin teaching while completing required coursework;
- established a State Board-approved teacher apprenticeship program;
- aligned endorsement requirements with program standards;
- reallocated staff and begun automating certification processing; and
- initiated the development of a statewide mentoring framework for districts.

House Bill 832, effective July 1, 2026, removes redundant experience requirements and simplifies the transition from industry to the classroom. House Bill 849 addresses the mid-career wage compression identified in the report by accelerating advancement to the Professional rung of the career ladder. The Division expects the effects of those changes to become visible in fiscal years 2028 and 2029.

Several of the report's credentialing recommendations fall within the State Board of Education's rulemaking authority, and the Division is working closely with the Board to ensure that any changes address demonstrated barriers and can be implemented consistently across the state.

Access and scale

Perhaps the report's most consequential finding concerns scale. Across the three school years examined, Idaho's smallest districts employed only six Engineering and Technology teachers and two Health Professions teachers statewide. That is not a challenge that any single district can solve through recruitment alone.

The Division is developing regional models and working with the Workforce Development Council to better align program offerings with labor-market demand. The report's findings confirm what local educators have long understood: career technical centers make it possible to sustain high-cost programs that individual districts cannot support independently.

Where legislative action is necessary

Two of the report's principal policy options require legislative action. First, allowing PACFs to support base instructional salaries would bring Idaho into closer alignment with neighboring states. However, as the report notes, such a change is only workable if accompanied by additional appropriations. Equipment and facility costs were the most frequently cited funding challenge in the evaluation's survey, identified by 59 percent of respondents, and PACF remains the primary source of support for those needs. Without additional funding, expanding salary flexibility would simply exchange one shortage for another.

The same concern applies to a CTE-specific support-unit adjustment. Any revenue-neutral change would necessarily redistribute resources away from districts with limited CTE offerings. Any revised formula should also preserve appropriate class-size limits for laboratory- and equipment-intensive CTE courses, where smaller enrollments reflect legitimate safety and instructional requirements rather than inefficiency.

These are not arguments against reform. Rather, they are arguments for implementing reform in a way that addresses underlying constraints rather than shifting them elsewhere.

Clarifications

Two points may help legislators reading the Executive Summary apart from the full report. First, the summary states that PACFs cannot be used for a CTE teacher's regular salary. Exhibit 15 provides a more complete description: PACF may support extended contracts, career technical student organization travel, and health-professions clinical supervision, but not base salary. Including that distinction in the summary would avoid the impression that PACF has no personnel-related uses.

Second, survey exhibits would benefit from displaying both the number of respondents and the number of responding local education agencies. Several findings are based on subsets of the total sample, and presenting both figures would provide additional context for readers.

Closing

This evaluation arrives at an important moment. The Division is already redesigning how CTE funding is distributed, how industry professionals enter and remain in the classroom, and how programs are aligned with workforce demand. The report provides an independent evidentiary foundation for that work and offers legislators a shared factual basis for the decisions ahead.

We appreciate the professionalism and rigor that your office brought to this evaluation and look forward to continuing this work with both the Office of Performance Evaluations and the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Pete Risse
State Administrator
Idaho Division of Career Technical Education



August 6, 2026

Casey Petti
Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho Legislature
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0055

RE: IDE review of the OPE draft report on secondary career technical education

Dear Mr. Petti:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Office of Performance Evaluations' (OPE) draft report, *"Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding"*.

High-quality career technical education (CTE) is essential to preparing students for continued education, employment, and Idaho's evolving workforce needs. As Idaho's statewide elected official responsible for K-12 education and a member of both the State Board of Education and the State Board for Career Technical Education, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the report's findings and identify ways Idaho can strengthen CTE opportunities for students.

As policymakers consider the report's findings and recommendations, Idaho should build on proven strategies, remove unnecessary barriers, and give school districts and public charter schools greater flexibility to respond to local and regional needs.

A MORE FLEXIBLE, LOCALLY DRIVEN FUNDING MODEL

As the report notes, high-quality CTE instruction costs more than many traditional academic courses. Programs require specialized instructors, industry-standard equipment, consumable materials, appropriate facilities, and ongoing investment to keep pace with workforce needs.

Additional funding alone, however, will not resolve the limitations of Idaho's current system. The state must also provide greater flexibility in how CTE funds may be combined and used and allow full spending authority for all federal dollars.

Consistent with the flexibility encouraged in federal funding guidance, Idaho should allow school districts, local education agencies, and public charter schools to braid available funding sources and collaborate across schools, communities, and regions. This would allow local



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leaders to use resources more strategically in response to student needs and regional workforce demands. These desired changes need to take place without supplanting existing revenue streams.

Idaho Career Ready Students Program

I support the Wyoming block-grant concept identified in the report. However, Idaho has already established a successful mechanism that achieves many of the same objectives: the Idaho Career Ready Students program. This significant funding source is not addressed in the OPE report.

The Legislature established Idaho Career Ready Students through House Bill 267 in 2023. Advanced during my first term in office, the initiative was designed to expand access to CTE, particularly in rural and remote communities, and better align secondary education with local and statewide workforce needs. The Legislature invested \$45 million in the program in FY24 and an additional \$20 million in FY25.

The program awards competitive grants to school districts and public charter schools serving students in grades 7-12. During its first three years, the state's investment has expanded or supported approximately 170 CTE programs statewide, demonstrating the value and effectiveness of the model.

Idaho Career Ready Students avoids many restrictions associated with traditional state funding. It allows local education leaders to identify their most pressing needs, develop programs aligned with local industries, and direct state investments where they will have the greatest impact.

Through the program, districts and charter schools may:

- Establish or expand programs aligned with local and regional workforce needs;
- Develop exploratory CTE courses for middle school students;
- Collaborate with other school systems, industry partners, and postsecondary institutions;
- Purchase industry-standard equipment, materials, and technology;
- Construct, renovate, or upgrade facilities; and

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- Make significant start-up investments that cannot be supported through annual added-cost allocations alone.

The Idaho Career Ready Students model addresses needs that are difficult to meet through the current Program Added Cost Funds model. It reduces administrative barriers, allows districts to use resources strategically, and supports upgrades to facilities and equipment that are often not feasible.

Rather than create a separate block-grant system, Idaho should build on the proven Idaho Career Ready Students framework. Continued investment, combined with greater flexibility to braid state, federal, local, and private resources, would preserve accountability and local decision-making while allowing Idaho to expand high-quality CTE opportunities more quickly.

MODERNIZING CTE INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION AND COMPENSATION

CTE Instructor Certification

As the report notes, Idaho's current CTE certification process does not always keep pace with the changing needs of students and the workforce. Appropriate standards are essential to instructional quality, but unnecessary barriers can discourage highly qualified professionals from entering the classroom.

CTE instructors bring specialized knowledge, technical expertise, industry credentials, and practical workplace experience. Yet complex requirements, lengthy approval processes, and inadequate recognition of industry experience can discourage highly qualified professionals from teaching. These challenges are particularly significant in rural and remote communities, where the pool of potential instructors is already limited.

The Idaho Division of Career Technical Education has made progress in this area. Continued attention is needed to streamline certification and create clearer, more flexible pathways for individuals moving from industry into the classroom.

The state should:

- Recognize relevant industry experience, credentials, and demonstrated technical competence as meaningful qualifications;
- Reduce unnecessary coursework, paperwork, and administrative delays;

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Career Technical Education Teachers and Funding

- Continue mentoring and targeted professional development to help industry professionals transition successfully to teaching; and
- Continue coordination among state agencies, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and industry partners so certification requirements can respond more quickly to emerging workforce needs.

CTE Instructor Compensation

I also support the report's recommendation that CTE instructor compensation account for fields in which qualified professionals can earn substantially more in industry than in education. A uniform salary schedule does not reflect the labor-market realities in health care, advanced manufacturing, information technology, construction, engineering, and other high-demand fields.

Districts need the flexibility and resources to offer competitive compensation to recruit and retain instructors with specialized expertise. Any differentiated compensation model should receive dedicated state funding so districts are not required to redirect resources from other teachers or instructional programs.

Funding decisions should also prioritize CTE programs connected to in-demand careers. Statewide and regional workforce data should identify occupations with significant employer demand, persistent vacancies, or projected growth. However, statewide priorities should not eliminate local discretion. Workforce needs vary across Idaho, and districts and public charter schools should retain the ability to invest in programs that address documented regional needs.

Together, a modernized certification system, competitive compensation, and targeted funding for high-demand fields would expand student access to high-quality CTE and strengthen the pipeline of skilled workers for Idaho employers.

CAREER EXPLORATION IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

The Idaho Department of Education has found that exploratory CTE experiences are particularly valuable for students in grades 7 and 8. By exploring multiple career fields, students can identify their interests and aptitudes and make more informed decisions before selecting a specific CTE pathway in high school.

Middle school students should not be expected to specialize prematurely. Idaho should preserve and strengthen broad career exploration while connecting those experiences to the

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specialized programs students may pursue in high school. An effective CTE system must value both exploratory and pathway-based programming.

Because the OPE report does not address funding for middle school CTE or career exploration, I encourage legislators to consider these needs in future CTE funding discussions.

CONCLUSION

Idaho has an opportunity to build on what is working while modernizing how CTE programs are funded and supported.

The state should preserve middle school career exploration, expand the flexible and locally driven Idaho Career Ready Students model, streamline certification pathways for industry professionals, and provide competitive compensation for instructors in high-demand fields.

This work should also include a commitment to maximizing available federal funding. Idaho should fully use its Perkins V allocation, give districts and public charter schools greater flexibility to braid federal, state, local, and private resources, and ensure that federal dollars support eligible CTE activities rather than being returned unused.

Maximizing federal funding would allow Idaho to use state appropriations more strategically. State dollars could then address emerging workforce needs, rural and remote communities, facilities and equipment, innovative exploratory programs, and other priorities that federal funding cannot adequately support.

Together, these changes would create a more responsive and efficient CTE system that preserves local decision-making, directs resources where they will have the greatest impact, and better serves Idaho's students, communities, and employers.

Sincerely,



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Find the report at legislature.idaho.gov/ope



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