



STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE¹ for Community Technology Centers

Name of Organization:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Web:

Person Completing Evaluation:

Evaluator:

Date:

TFA affiliated Community Technology Centers (CTCs) provide access to computers and related technologies to people who typically do not have this access. CTCs provide opportunities to their clients to learn how to use technology tools. Their clients develop personal skills, explore new avenues of creativity and build self-esteem through their programs.

The purpose of these Standards of Excellence for Computer Technology Centers is to provide a clear set of standards by which all CTCs can assess themselves. The goal is to provide a systematic process for insuring that CTCs have basic operational and programmatic standards in place. This program is designed to encourage improvement of operations and long-term sustainability.

This document is intentionally flexible in order to be relevant to the many different organizational models of CTCs. Some CTCs are independent operations that have a large staff, a board of directors and many volunteers. Many CTCs are a significant part of an organization's broader program. Other CTCs have only one person on staff and are a small part of a much larger multi-level and multi-service organization.

This Standards of Excellence program has three elements: Minimum Standards, Preferred Practices, and Best Practices. Each builds on the other.

The statement of the Best Practices is a preliminary one. As we work with together with CTCNet we will be able to identify better the indicators of what it means to be a successful CTC.

The Best Practices and Preferred Practices are provided as an assessment tool for evaluating the operations of a CTC. These are standards that all CTCs should try to implement in order to provide better service to their clients and the community. The Preferred Practices are standards that most CTCs will have in place if they have a well-functioning program. The Best Practices are standards that CTCs should work towards implementing in order to continue growing and improving. The Minimum Standards are those operational issues that should be in place for any CTC. These are considered very basic.

The Standards of Excellence program should include a periodic review of each CTC by an outside consultant or by a colleague from a different CTC every year.

¹ Adapted by Technology For All(TFA) from a similar document used by permission and created by the Lowell Telecommunications CTC, Boston, through a "Field Innovation Grant" funded by the America Connects Consortium (www.americaconnects.net) a U.S. Department of Education initiative to support DOE funded community technology centers. Use of document must include this complete footnote. Version 3.3

Vision/Mission

Best Practice

_____ The CTC/organization's programs promote and advance the mission and vision of the entire organization.

_____ The CTC/organization's directors and leadership encourage, support and promote the CTC program and involve the entire staff in its sustainability.

Preferred Standards

_____ The CTC/organization integrates technology into program activities.

_____ Technology is not the end product; it is used to improve existing curriculum and/or create new programs

Minimum Standard

_____ The CTC/organization has defined needs for technology tools.

Administrative Structure

Preferred Standards

_____ The CTC/organization has policies that address the terms of use for computer labs and scheduling procedures.

_____ The CTC/organization adheres to generally accepted accounting practices for financial systems.

_____ The CTC/organization has an annual financial audit or review.

_____ Purchasing agents are aware of purchasing programs that offer discounts on hardware, software, etc.

_____ Legal counsel and other professional expertise are available to support the CTC/organization.

Minimum Standard

_____ There is sufficient insurance coverage, including general liability insurance, replacement value insurance on the contents.

_____ The CTC/organization is able to meet grant requirements.

_____ The CTC/organization has a system in place to manage internal communication between staff, i.e., a communication log, email, staff meetings, intranet, etc.

_____ The CTC/organization has an efficient record keeping system.

Programming/Curriculum

Best Practice

_____ The CTC/organization's curriculum meets the clients' goals and the objectives/mission of the CTC/organization.

_____ Programs create opportunities to develop and expand the client's independent learning abilities.

Preferred Standards

_____ CTC/organization's staff encourage and promote an environment in which participants eventually reinvest their skills and learning back into the program through volunteerism and peer contributions.

_____ The instructors are focused on the clients learning the material. They do not push through the course for the sake of completing all of it regardless of whether the clients understand it.

_____ The instructors are able to adjust to different class dynamics.

_____ The clients' accomplishments are displayed at the CTC/organization or other appropriate venue.

_____ The curriculum is relevant to the clients' lives and incorporates their knowledge and life experience.

_____ The instructors are able to adjust to varying client ability.

_____ The CTC/organization is able to accommodate special needs, e.g. multiple languages, large print, physical barriers, ergonomic work stations, voice recognition software, etc.

Minimum Standard

_____ The curriculum fits within a larger context in the community.

_____ The clients complete at least one tangible product by the end of the course.

_____ The instructors are able to incorporate the different learning styles of the clients, i.e. kinetic, visual, auditory.

_____ People who were not involved in its creation may easily teach the curriculum.

_____ The program meets the needs of the community.

_____ There is consistency in the programs.

_____ There is a structure to the programs.

_____ Each program has clear objectives.

Infrastructure of CTC

Best Practice

_____ The CTC/organization has and implements a technology and strategic plan.

_____ These plans are reviewed at least once per year with the input of staff and CTC clients/participants.

Preferred Standards

_____ The CTC/organization maintains a web site or intranet.

_____ Software, licensing information and manuals are stored in a central location.

_____ The CTC/organization maintains a complete inventory of all hardware and software, including purchasing and warranty information. This inventory is updated regularly.

_____ There is a process to document and track repairs and other work done on hardware. This includes easy access to outside technical support contact information, serial numbers for the equipment, etc.

Minimum Standard

- _____ The computers are networked to each other.
- _____ There is up to date virus protection software on all the computers.
- _____ There is a system in place (i.e. disk imaging) that allows staff to easily restore the computers to their original configuration.
- _____ The computers are backed up regularly.
- _____ All workstations have internet access.
- _____ The physical environment of the CTC/organization meets the needs of the staff and clients..
- _____ The CTC/organization has hardware and software that are related to the program.
- _____ The CTC/organization has adequate resources to ensure that the equipment operates well.

Program Personnel (paid and unpaid)

Best Practice

- _____ The staff understands how their work fits into the broader vision of CTC/organizational activities and/or how it affects the community at large. They have a global perspective of their work.
- _____ There is a volunteer management program with clear job descriptions, responsibilities, and expectations.

Preferred Standards

- _____ The program fosters an environment of teamwork, cooperation, and the sharing of knowledge among staff and volunteers.
- _____ The staff have opportunities for professional development and continuing education. This includes peer-to-peer training and outside training.
- _____ The staff receive an annual performance evaluation.

Minimum Standard

- _____ The staff have job descriptions that reflect the work they actually perform.
- _____ The staff maximize the resources available to them.
- _____ The organization has a commitment to have a designated person to run the CTC or there is a system in place that allows the CTC to function well without constant staff supervision.
- _____ The staff have sufficient skills to meet program requirements.
- _____ The staff are able to make clients feel welcome, empowered, independent and comfortable.
- _____ There is a comprehensive employee handbook.
- _____ "Volunteer" is considered a pay grade, not a job description.

Tech Support

Preferred Standard

- _____ There is documentation for system support and technical troubleshooting (aka "cheat sheets").
- _____ The staff have a minimum of technical self-sufficiency and know-how to teach troubleshooting skills.
- _____ There is a pool of technical volunteers.

Minimum Standard

- _____ There is sufficient technical support and resources to sustain the programs of the CTC.
- _____ There is a process for staff development that will increase their technical skills.
- _____ There are a variety of resources for technical support including outside technical support, tools and software utilities to repair equipment.

Measurement/Evaluation

Best Practice

- _____ There are adequate evaluation tools or methods to measure the clients' conceptual and applied abilities.
- _____ The CTC/organization uses evaluation data to address larger social issues.
- _____ The CTC/organization collaborates with other like-minded organizations in collecting and aggregating data to demonstrate the impact of the CTCs on a broad scale.
- _____ The CTC/organization aggregates the collected data to demonstrate impact of their program on the community.
- _____ The CTC/organization has a method to measure clients' progress from beginning to completion of the program.
- _____ The CTC/organization requires that programs, technical information and performance evaluations are documented.

Preferred Standards

- _____ The CTC/organization uses an exit evaluation in order to learn how their program is not meeting the expectations of clients who drop out before completing the program.
- _____ The program instructors and other staff perform peer-to-peer evaluations.
- _____ The program instructors evaluate their own performance.
- _____ There is an efficient method for collecting, reporting and analyzing data that is relevant for the CTC/organization.
- _____ The CTC/organization uses the evaluations to obtain critical feedback about the learning process.

Minimum Standard

- _____ The CTC/organization has a process to track the participation and retention of clients.
- _____ The CTC/organization prescreens clients in order to establish a baseline of knowledge for the class.
- _____ Evaluations are used as a means to improve the instructors' performance. They are not punitive.
- _____ The clients complete an evaluation at the completion of the program in order to determine if the objectives of the program were met.
- _____ The CTC/organization collects clients' success stories and testimonials.

Fund Raising for Technical Center

Best Practice

- _____ The organization integrates public relations and fund raising in the development program.
- _____ The organization has a development plan that integrates the needs of the CTC.

Preferred Standard

- _____ The CTC/organization has a contingency plan in place should funding unexpectedly end.
- _____ There are multiple sources for funding including in-kind donations, federal, state and local funding, individual donors, and private donors.
- _____ There is a budget with cash flow projections that is reviewed periodically.
- _____ The CTC/organization clearly articulates the need for their services in the community and why it must continue.
- _____ The CTC/organization has marketing materials that promote their program to the community, donors and other stakeholders.

Minimum Standards

- _____ The CTC/organization has formed strategic partnerships with other agencies, corporations, etc.
- _____ The CTC/organization has a budget.

Collaboration

Best

- _____ The CTC/organization has tangible and appropriate collaborative efforts with other CTCs, government agencies and nonprofit organizations in the community.
- _____ The CTC/organization participates in periodic peer reviews.
- _____ The CTC/organization takes advantage of economies of scale through collaboration.

Preferred

- _____ CTC/organization co-authors grants and / or provides support for fundraising efforts for a variety of partners with whom they work.
- _____ Representatives from the CTC/organization participate in Technology For All-Houston, area community technology and other peer organization meetings and events.
- _____ The CTC/organization is engaged in effective communication among other CTCs on the local, regional and national levels.

Minimum

- _____ The CTC/organization seeks input from other CTCs and local agencies to meet program objectives.

Technology For All
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