

Advancing the Vision: Investing in CTE Without Limits

Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education, developed by Advance CTE and supported by an additional 38 national organizations, puts forth a bold vision for a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem that will close equity gaps in educational outcomes and workforce readiness and leverage Career Technical Education (CTE) as a catalyst for ensuring that each learner can reach success in the career of their choice.

CTE Without Limits aims to eliminate the barriers that limit opportunity and success for learners, wherever they are in their career journey and whatever their background. Institutional barriers that keep K-12, postsecondary, workforce development and economic development separate and siloed; systemic barriers that perpetuate inequities and limit opportunity; geographic barriers that limit access; and a lack of data-informed decisionmaking by state and local leaders in developing CTE programs and interventions are among the most critical challenges that must be addressed for CTE to achieve its full potential of equitably providing learners with the skills they need to achieve lifelong success.

CTE Without Limits lays out five inter-connected and equally critical principles:



Each learner engages in a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem.



Each learner feels welcome in, is supported by and has the means to succeed in the career preparation ecosystem.



Each learner skillfully navigates their own career journey.



Each learner's skills are counted, valued and portable.



Each learner can access CTE without borders.

This shared vision requires collective action from the public and private sectors to realize its principles, with public education and workforce leaders, business and industry, and philanthropic partners all working together. This vision builds directly on the work that funders are supporting to improve CTE across the country, while pushing for innovations that will require new investments and experimentation. CTE Without Limits can serve as a roadmap, helping leaders identify the most critical challenges or gaps they are in a position to address and outline a path for future action.

Investing in the Vision

To move this vision forward, strategic investment is needed across the country in three key areas: breaking down silos within and among K-12, postsecondary, business and workforce development; dismantling barriers that currently prevent learners from participating or succeeding in high-quality CTE programs; and building the capacity within the career preparation ecosystem to embrace and use more data-informed decisionmaking.

By investing in initiatives in these three key areas, funders can have the greatest impact and help the CTE field achieve the goal of a more equitable future for all learners.

Attending to equity

A commitment to equity is a foundational component in the CTE Without Limits vision statement, as well as a cross-cutting lens across all five of the vision's core principles. To achieve economic and social equity in American society, CTE can serve as a vehicle for learners from a wider diversity of backgrounds to achieve real career success — but only if we take concrete actions to make this vision a reality.

Our country's funding structures often perpetuate inequities, at both the learner and the system levels, with the gaps between well-resourced and under-resourced communities and institutions limiting options and contributing to different, unequal opportunities for many learners. We need new funding models that ensure that resources reach the learners and communities that need them the most. At the same time, philanthropic investments in system-wide, data-driven equity audits and high-quality CTE programs and interventions that effectively serve marginalized populations are critical to increasing the capacity of the broader system to address equity gaps.

Supporting cross-sector and cross-state collaboration

To break down the silos in CTE education, collaboration is needed within and across states and across sectors to capture learning where and when it happens. Funders can provide critical support by convening key agencies and leaders to develop shared goals to bring about a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem. Investment in existing cross-sector partnerships and inter-state compacts can also play a critical role in opening up dialogue, increasing coordination, and building capacity inside and across organizations. Such efforts can improve both the frequency and the quality of communications that take place across different sectors and help break down geographic barriers that artificially separate state systems, leading to a more seamless ecosystem without borders

Funding innovation

Philanthropy has a long history as an incubator of innovation. Funders can invest in the creation of pioneering pilot projects and new models as well as in efforts that help share knowledge with the broader field about the lessons learned from these initiatives. For example, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a continued need for and interest in finding new ways to make high-quality CTE available virtually. Funders can invest in efforts to scale up these and other promising and innovative CTE practices, including advancing competency-based models, aligning advisement systems so they can have a wider impact, and ensuring that credits and credentials are truly portable within and across states.

Explore the Vision

Philanthropic investment can make a critical difference in successfully building and scaling a career preparation ecosystem that is more equitable, accessible and meaningful for all learners.

To read the full vision, access additional resources and sign up to stay engaged, please visit www.careertech.org/without-limits.