

The Role of State Collaboration in Advancing 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.

Supporting a career preparation ecosystem that puts equity at its center will require collective action and strong leadership. State leaders in particular — including K-12 leaders, postsecondary leaders, workforce development leaders and elected policymakers — have essential roles in tackling the status quo, working collaboratively and removing key barriers to bring this vision to life. Only by joining forces in this manner can states ensure that more learners have access to high-skill jobs with growth opportunities and a living wage and that employers have access to a pipeline of highly qualified individuals to meet their workforce needs.

At the heart of this vision are state-developed career preparation ecosystems that support each learner throughout their career journey. For too long, systems have remained siloed, learner supports have been provided inequitably, and opportunity has been limited by inflexible structures and uneven access to high-quality CTE programs and experiences. By working together to take bold action, state leaders can drive CTE forward, building a more prosperous and equitable future for their states.

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.

How State Leaders Can Advance the New Vision for CTE

While state leaders have critical roles in advancing all five principles and related actions, the vision will move forward only when state leaders collaborate and develop shared solutions. CTE Without Limits outlines a number of specific actions that will require cross-sector solutions:

Establish shared, statewide goals for a cohesive career preparation ecosystem

States must adopt shared goals amongst sectors that serve the preschool through workforce (PreK-20W) continuum. These shared goals — and the aligned policies, programs, federal plans, data, metrics and funding driven by the shared goals — must recognize the need for more coherence across education and workforce systems to fully meet the diverse needs of learners.

Expand data and accountability models that value collaboration, equity and innovation

Accountability systems and structures must focus on the most essential outcomes needed to bring about greater equity. These outcomes include equitable success in a meaningful, well-paying career for each learner through systems that place value on competencies and skills, not just seat time. Meeting this goal will require new, collaboratively developed state- and institution-level metrics that measure the full continuum of CTE.

Fully diagnose and understand the scope of institutional barriers and systemic racism

States should conduct equity audits to assess how CTE is serving learners of color and other marginalized populations. These audits must take into account policies and processes at the state level that historically and systemically put barriers in place for certain learners due to racism or other forms of discrimination. These efforts must be coordinated across the broader education and workforce systems. While CTE has its own equity challenges, the work to fully eliminate all barriers put before learners is a shared responsibility that will require shared solutions. Offer integrated PreK-20W advisement systems

States must align career advising and career navigation support systems, including individual career and academic plans at the K-12 level, guided pathways at the postsecondary level, and career services offered through organizations that serve adults seeking upskilling or reskilling opportunities. By connecting the dots between career advisement and wraparound supports, learners will be fully supported on their pathways to success.

Capture and value all learning that occurs, wherever and whenever it occurs

States should continue to support, expand and scale competency-based policies and programs within and across systems — and within and across states — to credit students for skills attainment no matter where or when it happens. States can also give institutions more flexibility in the design and delivery of CTE programs so they are not beholden to seat time requirements.

Develop inter-state compacts that support collaboration and remove barriers

States should build on existing inter-state compact efforts to further enable the flow of learners, data, instructors, credits and credentials across state lines to better reflect the realities of the global economy in which learners and employers live. They should also consider ways to expand access to CTE programs and experiences within their own states.

Explore the Vision

By taking these essential steps, state leaders can successfully ensure that CTE in their state becomes more equitable, accessible and meaningful, enabling each learner to develop the skills and knowledge they need to set them on a path for economic prosperity.

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