

From its earliest roots, employer engagement has been a part of the legacy of Career Technical Education (CTE). From advising on state-developed standards and preferred credentials to participating in student skills competitions, employers who interact with state CTE systems can get a greater return on their investment of time and energy. Such engagement has the ability to improve students' educational experiences and, in turn, strengthen the talent pipeline.

Yet, little is known about what is really happening consistently and systematically across the country, and what state leaders can do to help accelerate effective employer engagement. With business and policy leaders keenly focused on how to increase and deepen partnerships between CTE and employers, the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTE^c) set out to identify the “state” of employer engagement in CTE.

Through a survey of 47 State CTE Directors and a dozen interviews with state and national leaders, this report seeks to illustrate the employer engagement landscape today with a particular focus on the ways in which states are and can foster sustained, meaningful employer engagement to strengthen CTE for all students.

The survey showed that states across the country are stepping up in a variety of ways to support, incentivize and accelerate employer engagement throughout their CTE systems.

- ▶ The vast majority of states are using the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as a means of boosting employer engagement, most often by requiring or encouraging local advisory committees. Ten states require local programs to incorporate work-based learning, employer-related professional development and/or monetary or in-kind contributions to receive Perkins funding.

The findings are clear — not only is employer engagement happening, it's increasing and will continue to increase in the future.

- ▶ Nearly every state is also leveraging state policies and programs to foster employer engagement in CTE, most commonly by collaborating with state economic or workforce development agencies (42 states), supporting partner-focused pilot initiatives (26 states), providing guidance for local CTE-employer partnerships (23 states) and/or offering state-funded competitive grants (21 states).
- ▶ More than 40 states engage employers in the development or review of state CTE standards and/or in the selection of industry-recognized credentials.

The findings are clear — not only is employer engagement happening, from the vantage point of State Directors, it is increasing and will continue to do so in the future. However, much work remains to be done by education and employers to identify the most impactful and appropriate policy levers and to scale and sustain successful efforts. States must consider a coordinated strategy that draws upon the full range of resources available to them to bring education and employers together for mutually beneficial partnerships that will positively impact all students.