

Key Tips for Briefing Policymakers on CTE

It is inevitable that when new education and workforce leaders are elected or appointed, they will have questions about Career Technical Education (CTE) given its increased prominence across the nation. This provides an incredible opportunity to brief leadership directly or indirectly on what is happening with regards to CTE in your state, where more work is needed and how they can be involved. These tips and questions to expect will help you prepare for those opportunities, while still advancing your statewide vision for CTE.

Getting Started

Regardless of who you engage – whether directly or indirectly through a colleague or partner – there are a number of strategies to remember:

- **Lock in Your Core Messages:** Before you put together any resources and materials, you must first develop your core messages that are at the heart of any and every presentation you do, meeting you take and even email you write. These should be shared far and wide – particularly internally with your staff and colleagues – but also with partners, ambassadors and supporters. These key messages should speak to what makes CTE so critical in your state and what you most want or need to further improve your system. (For more on developing core messages, see [CTE Advocacy 101](#))
- **Identify your “non-negotiable” priorities and where there is room for improvement:** This is critically important! You aren’t just briefing new leadership on where CTE is now, but where it should go in the future. To do this effectively, you must identify and share those reforms, policies and practices that are vital to advancing your statewide vision for CTE, while being clear about gaps in the system where new ideas, resources and policies are needed, including barriers that need to be removed. This is must-do pre-work for any briefing.
- **Build Rock Solid Materials:** Having clear, well-designed assets that tell the story of CTE in your state will make engaging new leaders so much easier in the long run. Being able to communicate the what, why, how and who of CTE in your state in a compact set of PowerPoint slides will help you clarify your message, which a leave-behind one-pager can reinforce. Make sure these have strong and clear data, graphics and stories that are compelling and easy to follow.
- **Avoid Jargon:** Everyone is susceptible to using abbreviations and inside baseball language – especially those in education! – but keep in mind, you may be engaging policymakers and staff who have limited familiarity with terms like “CTE,” “WIOA,” “Perkins,” or “IRCs.” Only use straight-forward, non-jargon language whenever possible.

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- **Do Your Homework and Know Your Audience:** While the base of your presentation and talking points should be consistent no matter who you speak to, it will be important to tailor any presentation or briefing to your audience. Key questions to ask yourself are: *how much do they already know about CTE in my state? Are they already advocates or do they need to be convinced? What are their priorities and where do those priorities align and intersect with CTE?*
- **Identify and Tailor Your “Ask:”** Anytime you engage in a briefing or presentation with leaders or partners, you should have a clear ask in mind. Depending on the type of meeting and individual you are meeting with, the ask can be as simple as scheduling a follow up meeting or can be as large as taking on a specific policy action. Any “ask” must be tailored based on what the leader or audience has the power to do within their purview.
- **Make It Local:** Nothing makes CTE come alive like learner success stories or examples of schools or colleges making a unique mark on their students’ and communities’ lives. Always have success stories in your back pocket and even include them in your presentations. Bonus points if they align with a policymaker’s hometown or region.
- **Work with your Ambassadors:** You won’t be able to provide every briefing – and shouldn’t! Knowing your audience also means knowing who they want to hear from. You should identify members of your team and key partners – such as employers, local CTE leaders and even students – who can be prepped to contribute or lead briefings. Most important is that these core partners are on the same page as you in terms of key messages and priorities moving forward. (For more on engaging ambassadors, see [Career Readiness Stakeholder Engagement Tool](#))
- **Establish Yourself as a Resource Expert & Partner:** You are a critical resource for other state policymakers – not only as a CTE content expert, but as a broker into the field that has a lot of players and someone who can help connect dots and pull together coalitions and key partners.
- **Your First Briefing Shouldn’t Be Your Last:** Finally, it is important to maintain open lines of communication with policymakers in your state. With elected and appointed leaders in office a minimum of two, four or more years, the initial briefings are opportunities to build long-term relationships built on open communications and mutually identified goals.

Tailoring Your Message

While the nuts and bolts for briefing new leadership are fairly consistent across the board, there are some additional considerations you should take depending on who you are briefing, such as their position in the state and role within CTE, how they came into their position and what their priorities are. What follows are tips and guidance for engaging different policy leaders in your state.

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Tips for Briefing the Governor and his/her staff

- Take the time to review the Governor's education and workforce priorities to identify areas of alignment.
- Review your briefing materials (e.g., PPT slides, fact sheets, etc.) and remove any overt references to prior administrations (especially in case of a party change).
- Ensure your briefing materials include a focus on jobs and leverage the "business case" for CTE. Take the time to highlight any major employers or industries that are strong partners and advocates for CTE.
- Identify the most important aspects of CTE system you believe need to be sustained or advanced as well as any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE and the new governor's agenda. Are there any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE that may not have gotten accomplished under former leadership? Are there any barriers, red tape or policy changes you need addressed in order to move forward?
- End any briefing with an offer to follow up with more information, examples from other states or just to be a resource as they develop their policy priorities. (For state examples, see [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#) or contact Advance CTE [staff](#)).

Questions to Expect from a Governor and his/her Staff:

- What is the impact of CTE in the state?
- What is working in CTE and what is not? What does "quality" look like in CTE? How well is CTE serving all learners, including historically marginalized learners?
- What is the impact of Perkins V in your state? How has the Governor's office been involved in the development and implementation of the state plan in the past? How can they be involved going forward?
- How do CTE and workforce development align? Where are there opportunities for greater alignment?
- What is the role of business/industry in the CTE system? The role of workforce development? Economic development? Apprenticeships?
- What big trends are on the horizon for CTE?

Tips for Briefing a Legislator and his/her staff

- Take the time to review the new legislator's education and workforce priorities to identify areas of alignment.
- Pull data from colleges, districts and schools that reside within the legislator's district to show the impact of CTE – or potential gaps where new resources and supports are needed.
- Personalize your briefing materials with data and examples of employers and CTE programs from the legislator's district to make it local. If appropriate, reach out to any employers or administrators in the legislator's district beforehand so you can share their perspectives.
- Identify the most important aspects of CTE system you believe need to be sustained or advanced as well as any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE and the new governor's agenda. Are there any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE that may not have gotten accomplished under former leadership? Are there any barriers, red tape or legislative changes you need addressed in order to move forward?
- End any briefing with an offer to follow up with more information, examples from other states or just to be a resource as they develop their policy priorities. (For state examples, see [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#) or contact Advance CTE [staff](#)).

Questions to Expect from a Legislator and his/her Staff:

- What is the impact of CTE in the state?
- What is working in CTE and what is not? What does "quality" look like in CTE? How well is CTE serving all learners, including historically marginalized learners?
- Where are innovations occurring in our states or others?
- What are the most effective or efficient ways to fund CTE?
- How can we expand work-based learning, including apprenticeships?
- How can we increase attainment of industry credentials?
- What big trends are on the horizon for CTE?

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Tips for Briefing the State Board of Education

- Take the time to review the new Board member's education priorities and background to identify areas of alignment and how they came into the position (e.g., elected, appointed by new governor, etc.). If appointed by the governor, consider the governor's education and workforce priorities as well.
- Lay out the State Board's role in supporting the CTE system, such as approving standards, the Perkins V plan, the list of approved industry-recognized credentials, etc. and the timeline for these actions.
- Identify the most important aspects of CTE system you believe need to be sustained or advanced as well as any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE that will require or be bolstered by State Board support. Are there any barriers, red tape or policy changes you need addressed in order to move forward?
- End any briefing with an offer to follow up with more information, examples from other states or just to be a resource as they develop their policy priorities. (For state examples, see [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#) or contact Advance CTE [staff](#)).

Questions to Expect from a State Board of Education Member and his/her Staff:

- What is working in CTE and what is not? What does "quality" look like in CTE? How well is CTE serving all learners, including historically marginalized learners?
- Where are innovations occurring in our states or others?
- What are the most effective or efficient ways to fund CTE?
- What is the state of the CTE teacher workforce?
- Where do we need to lean in immediately and in the longer term?
- Where does CTE fit within the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan?

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Tips for Briefing a K-12 State Superintendent

- Take the time to review the new chief's priorities and background to identify areas of alignment.
- Ensure your briefing materials include a focus on CTE's benefits to students. Take the time to highlight data that show the college- and career-ready outcomes for CTE students.
- Share how CTE is managed through the state education agency and integrated into other major initiatives or reforms, such as CTE's intersection with school improvement, stimulus investments, STEM education, guidance and advisement, and student supports.
- Identify the most important aspects of CTE system you believe need to be sustained or advanced as well as any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE and the new chief's priorities. Are there any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE that may not have gotten accomplished under former leadership? Are there any barriers, red tape or policy changes you need addressed in order to move forward?
- End any briefing with an offer to follow up with more information, examples from other states or just to be a resource as they develop their policy priorities. (For state examples, see [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#) or contact Advance CTE [staff](#)).

Questions to Expect from a new K-12 chief:

- What does "quality" look like in CTE?
- What is working in CTE and what is not?
- Which districts are leaders in CTE? Where might more intervention be needed?
- How are we serving students equitably by and through CTE? Are there gaps in access or success for any particular student populations?
- Where are innovations occurring in our states or others?
- Where does CTE fit within the state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan?

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Tips for Briefing a State Higher Education Executive Officer (SHEEO) or other Postsecondary Leadership

- Take the time to review the postsecondary leader's priorities and background to identify areas of alignment.
- Ensure your briefing materials include a focus on CTE's benefits to learners; highlight data that show how CTE supports postsecondary completion and placement goals.
- Share how CTE is managed through the postsecondary system and integrated into other major initiatives or reforms, such as CTE's intersection with guided pathways, stimulus investments, student success centers, credit for prior learning, and workforce development.
- Identify the most important aspects of CTE system you believe need to be sustained or advanced as well as any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE and the new postsecondary leader's priorities. Are there any new "asks" or ideas that align with your statewide vision for CTE that may not have gotten accomplished under former leadership? Are there any barriers, red tape or policy changes you need addressed in order to move forward?
- End any briefing with an offer to follow up with more information, examples from other states or just to be a resource as they develop their policy priorities. (For state examples, see [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#) or contact Advance CTE [staff](#)).

Questions to Expect from a SHEEO or Postsecondary Leader:

- What does "quality" look like in CTE, for both non-credit and credit programs?
- What is working in CTE and what is not?
- Which institutions are leaders in CTE? Where might more intervention be needed?
- How are we serving students equitably by and through CTE? Are there gaps in access or success for any particular learner populations?
- Where are innovations occurring in our states or others?
- Where does CTE fit within the state's Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan?

Referenced Resources

CTE Advocacy 101: https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE_Advocacy_101.pdf

Career Readiness Stakeholder Engagement Tool:
https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/Stakeholder_Engagement_Tool_2017.pdf

Learning that Works Resource Center: www.careertech.org/Resource-Center

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