



New State CTE Director Leadership Program

Module 3: Engaging Employers to Strengthen Your State CTE System

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How to Use the Modules

The New State Director Leadership Program is designed to fit the natural learning curve of new State CTE Directors as they explore their state CTE system as well as the policies and decisions that undergird it. To that end, Advance CTE has developed a 12-month curriculum with two in-person meetings, two webinars and intermittent optional phone calls to provide comprehensive supports to these new leaders. The program, with its curriculum, touchpoints and mentorship, is designed to allow new State Directors to access the support they need when they need it.

This module is part of the 12-month curriculum that is designed to help you be inquisitive about your state's current "state of play," evaluate the responses and information you gather, see what gaps exist and determine if, how and when you may want to take action. By answering the guiding questions and adding data where appropriate, you will be able to better visualize both where you are currently and where you want to take your state system.

The modules are laid out to help you organize your thoughts and guide effective discussions with both your mentor and Advance CTE staff who can help you consider and benchmark your findings, as well as provide resources, support and targeted technical assistance as you work your way through the modules.

Disclaimer: The modules do not constitute or replace legal advice. We encourage you to check with any relevant state and federal guidance and regulatory requirements to ensure compliance. Further, the examples listed within are not endorsements nor should they be considered a comprehensive list.

Module Objectives & Pre-Module Survey

Module Objectives

This module is designed to help you take action around employer engagement, primarily by:

- Reviewing the ways in which your state currently directly engages and partners with employers as well as supports engagement at the local level;
- Understanding the role of employers in a strong, aligned state CTE system to meet your state's workforce needs and economic goals; and
- Learning about strategies to partner and sustain engagement with employers at the state and local level.

Pre-module Survey

To begin this module, please take this brief self-assessment, and choose the "Employer Engagement" option: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NewSDpre-test>

Getting Started

Employer Engagement Refresher

As a first step, we encourage you to review these Advance CTE resources to understand the current conversations and trends from the field regarding employer engagement:

- [The State of Career Technical Education: Employer Engagement in CTE](#) (2015)
- [In Their Words: Why Business Leaders Support CTE, Career Pathways and Career Academies](#) (2016)

Resources from our partners:

- Jobs for the Future: [Employer Engagement Toolkit: From Placement to Partners](#)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation: [Managing the Talent Pipeline](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [Tools for Building Employer-Educator Partnerships](#)

Inventory

It will be helpful to first understand the ways in which your state currently engages with employers. Knowing and understanding the current state of play can be critical to making a thoughtful evaluation of whether those policies, programs and approaches are providing meaningful experiences both for learners and industry partners.

KEY DEFINITION: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

For the purposes of this module, the collaboration between CTE and the business and industry community is referred to simply as “employer engagement,” which can come in many different forms and vary in levels of intensity and scope. Importantly, we are using “employer” as shorthand for a wide range of business, industry and labor stakeholders – including multinational corporations, locally-owned businesses, industry associations and organized labor. In the context of this module, “employer” simply refers to an individual or organization that can represent the workforce in one or more industries.

To help answer the questions below, you may want to have the following information on hand:

- Any state policies or guidance related to local advisory committees, employer engagement and work-based learning
- Your state policies related to program and/or program of study approval, review and funding at the secondary and postsecondary levels
- Your state plan for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins)
- Your local plan requirements regarding programs and programs of study

Also, consider who you need to talk to gather information, both inside and outside of your office.

State Vision for CTE

The role of employers is embedded either explicitly or implicitly in all five principles of [Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE](#). This was intentional and demonstrates the value and necessity of employers in CTE’s past, present and future.

- What role do employers play currently in the development and execution of your state vision for CTE?

- How does your state’s vision for CTE align to other economic or workforce development initiatives in your state?
- What is the role of employers in developing/informing your state’s vision for CTE?

Let’s do a quick check of how employers are currently involved in your state CTE system. In the space below, quickly jot down the ways in which employers are *formally* or *informally* involved AT THE STATE LEVEL:

- CTE standards development and/or validation:
- Industry-recognized credentials identification and/or validation:
- Development and/or validation of state programs of study offerings:
- State policies for work-based learning:
- State CTE advisory council (or similar bodies convened through workforce or economic development agencies):
- Guidance for and/or validation of state labor market data and needs:

In the space below, quickly jot down how employers are involved AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

- Local advisory committees for CTE programs:
- Development and/or delivery of work-based learning:

- Development and/or delivery of CTE programs of study:

- Guidance for and/or validation of regional labor market data and needs:

Aligning Your CTE System to Other State Initiatives

Now that we know the myriad ways in which employers are engaging currently with your state CTE system, let's take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

It's often said that CTE sits at the intersection of education and workforce. Historically, many leaders within your state may have taken a limited or disconnected view of how CTE is related to the state's overall workforce and economic development needs. However, the potential is limitless, and in the past decade, more governors and legislators have begun realizing the power of a strong, aligned CTE system as an important component of any competitive economic development agenda. As State CTE Director, you can use this opportunity to open doors and make connections to other statewide strategic initiatives, and ultimately, create a stronger future for the learners within your state.

CTE has had a unique connection to employers since its inception, and over time, that relationship has evolved. Today, states are moving beyond episodic, exclusively local employer partnerships toward a more strategically aligned approach to create statewide systems that are driven by employers and use real-time labor market information (LMI) to create a dynamic, responsive approach to state and employer needs.

In this module, we will explore how you can **align** your state CTE system, **partner** with employers to create meaningful experiences for learners, and **support** high-quality employer engagement at the local level.

We also will share information, point you in the direction of states that you might want to investigate further and offer some leading questions for reflection. We encourage you to consider using this time as a new State Director to be inquisitive – and through that inquisitiveness, challenge assumptions.

Section 1: Intersections with Other State Initiatives and Systems

As State Director, one of your responsibilities – at the highest level – is to tend to the ways in which your state CTE system connects with and is aligned to the broader dynamics, initiatives and systems in your state. In doing this, you can tear down long-standing silos, reduce inefficiencies and create more meaningful partnerships which will, in turn, benefit learners, employers and your state's economy.

Intersections with Other State Initiatives and Systems

Options & Opportunities

Your starting point may vary depending on your state's structure, leadership and ongoing initiatives and priorities. In some instances, your state may have existing connections and relationships with other agencies or industry sectors that need to be strengthened or rebuilt. Or, you may have the unique opportunity to build those bridges for the first time. While that may be intimidating, it is also a rare opportunity for everyone involved to use that "fresh sheet of paper" mentality to build an effective partnership.

For example, you could forge or strengthen a partnership with your state's economic development agency to better use LMI to drive your program of study offerings and ensure they connect to high-skill, high-wage pathways. You could work with the workforce development agency and its board to identify a common set of credentials that are recognized and valued by employers. You could also

collaborate with other partners at the state and local level to coordinate resources and delivery models to create effective, aligned program offerings.

Federal Laws

One way to consider the intersections with your state CTE system is to first consider your state-level counterparts who manage the federal laws governing education and training – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Higher Education Act (HEA), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Each of these – to varying degrees – involve employers and have alignment opportunities that may be to CTE’s benefit. A starting place is to review your state’s plans for each of these laws and connect with the state leaders responsible for implementing them to identify opportunities for collaboration and alignment.

In Perkins and WIOA, in particular, the “high-skill, high-wage, high-demand” definitions are another place for intersection and collaboration. Though they are mentioned in federal law, it is up to the state to define these terms.

As a reminder from Module 1:

Because it is your state’s ability to define these terms, that’s where the real opportunity lies. You can define these terms for just CTE and Perkins, or you can choose to adopt or align these terms to other efforts/initiatives in states (e.g. state workforce priorities, governor’s economic sector priorities, etc.).

Partnership Models

[Sector strategies](#) can be a powerful approach for aligning the needs of business and industry with those of skilled workers to address current and emerging skills gaps while creating new partnerships and better using resources. This model uses partnerships of employers within a single industry to bring together government, education and training, economic development, labor and community organizations, and can be used at both the state and local levels to align policies and investments. Advance CTE’s partner, the [National Skills Coalition](#), has a useful sector partnership toolkit that can help you find the best path forward for your state context.

Some state CTE systems formally partner with their state workforce development boards. These state boards are a public-private partnership of employers, state officials and labor leaders. By putting formal partnerships in place, states can share or align their visions, and ensure CTE program offerings are directly aligned to the state’s in-demand industries and simultaneously reduce employer exhaustion (or multiple asks on a handful of employers). In some states, the State Director serves as an ex-officio member of the state Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) to maintain communication and coordination.

Most states maintain their own boards to advise on the CTE system. In 2014, Advance CTE [surveyed](#) the states to better understand the landscape of employer engagement in CTE. Nearly 75 percent reported having state-level advisory committees for secondary CTE and 60 percent had similar entities at the

postsecondary level. A majority of these bodies advise CTE across learner levels and consult on matters such as standards, credentials, and labor market data.

State Examples

Washington has the nation's longest-running sector partnership. Since 1991, the state's [Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board](#) coordinates 16 programs that are run by seven agencies, including the state community and technical college system's postsecondary CTE and adult education, as well as secondary CTE in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The board develops a statewide strategic plan and also measures performance for these programs to track taxpayer [return on investment](#).

Colorado passed legislation recognizing sector partnerships as a proven model for engaging employers ([2014 Senate Bill 205](#)) and requiring sector partnerships to be used in the development of industry-specific career pathways in order to ensure that pathways are employer-driven and meet industry needs ([2013 House Bill 1165](#) and [2015 House Bill 1274](#)). Read a case study of Colorado's sector partnership work starting on page 14 of this [toolkit](#).

In 2017, the **Tennessee** Department of Education commissioner convened the College, Career and Technical Education Transition Advisory Council to provide immediate insight and direction to guide the state's work in postsecondary and career readiness. This [report](#), released in February 2018, outlines a set of recommendations based on the challenges, desires and barriers to successful implementation of high-quality CTE programs. The Council also provided input on a unified vision for the next stage of college, career and technical education.

Since 2015, **Oklahoma** has had a cross-sector career readiness and workforce development initiative known as [Oklahoma Works](#), which uses a network of nine employer partnerships, or Key Economic Networks. Each network has an individual employer who coordinates local efforts.

Kentucky's New Skills for Youth initiative uses a governance and delivery system for CTE that is employer-led through regional workforce areas and ensures cross-institutional involvement. Check out the [MOUs](#) between its state Chamber of Commerce, Cabinet for Economic Development and other key partners to achieve this ambitious approach.

Key Questions: Intersections with Other State Initiatives and Systems

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
Intersections with Other State Initiatives, Systems	<p>Think back to your state CTE system’s definitions for high-wage, high-skill, high-demand careers and other key definitions such as programs of study and career pathways.</p> <p>Are these the shared definitions across agencies and initiatives or are they different? Why?</p>	
	<p>What opportunities are there to better align with workforce development? Economic development? Key industry associations? Unions? Other statewide employer organizations?</p>	
	<p>Do you have a statewide CTE advisory committee or equivalent?</p> <p>If yes, how do they influence or shape your state system?</p> <p>If no, what would it take to develop and formalize such a body?</p>	

Section 2: CTE Program Alignment and Validation

As noted in [Module 2: Driving Quality through Programs of Study](#), employers and labor market data should play a prominent role in the development and approval of high-quality CTE programs of study; as a state leader, one of the levers available to you through Perkins is to determine the degree to which employers are involved in this process.

Specifically, there are multiple components that make up a high-quality program of study that require industry input and validation, including, but not limited to:

- CTE standards, which are foundational to the courses and program itself;
- Industry-recognized credentials, which anchor the program of study;
- Labor market information, which signal the demand and relevance of programs of study;
- Instruction, which must be informed by industry standards and practices; and
- Work-based learning and Career Technical Student Organization experiences, which provide authentic experiential learning to connect the classroom and world of work.

In addition, as discussed above, employers can and should be involved in discussions around the overall organization of CTE programs of study, through a statewide advisory committee or otherwise. A place many states start is with the National Career Clusters® Framework.

Helpful Resources:

[Credentials of Value: State Strategies for Identifying and Endorsing Industry-recognized Credentials](#)

This policy brief from Advance CTE is designed to help states create order out of the chaos of more than 4,000 industry credentials available on the market and shares how three states are developing systems for learners and employers to navigate the tangled universe of credentials and ensure all programs culminate in a credential that is recognized and valued by the labor market.

[Putting Labor Market Information in the Right Hands: A Guide](#)

This guide from Advance CTE is designed to help states think through the process of disseminating LMI more strategically. The guide highlights work done in Nevada, Kentucky and Washington and their dissemination of LMI to employers, districts and learners, and poses guiding questions for states to consider for each of those audiences.

To receive additional assistance on how to use either of these resources, please email our State Policy Manager Ashleigh McFadden at amcfadden@careertech.org. Advance CTE is happy to provide virtual and in-person technical assistance.

CTE Program Alignment and Validation

Options & Opportunities

CTE Standards

[In 2013](#), an Advance CTE report found that states take a wide range of approaches to organizing and requiring standards for their CTE programs and courses at the secondary and postsecondary level. Even more so than academic standards, states often allow significant local decision-making with varying degrees of state-level guidance and policies to ensure implementation.

Why does this matter for employers? Your state standards for CTE – and the degree of adoption and implementation at the secondary and postsecondary level – can be an easy signal to employers about whether graduates of a given CTE

program will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in the workplace. And, when employers are not only engaged but an active participant in the design and validation of your state CTE standards, they can feel confident that programs are up to current industry standards.

In a [2014 report](#) from Advance CTE, a survey of State Directors found that 39 states engage employers to some degree when developing and validating their state CTE standards. However, the level of involvement varied greatly from industry representatives serving on standards writing committees to participating in one-time surveys to provide feedback on draft standards.

One caution: that 2013 report on state CTE standards found that that a majority of states had course-level standards that were more occupationally specific, rather than taking a broad approach and becoming more focused and specific over a program's progression from secondary into postsecondary. To ensure learners have the most options available to them, it's critical that standards begin broad to support multiple pathways. In some instances, employers may focus solely on those job-specific skills they need today, which can require a balancing act in the standards development process.

Industry-recognized Credentials

In that same 2014 report, 28 states said employers help determine which credentials or technical skills assessments should be used in CTE programs (a number that is likely higher today), but again, frequency and intensity of this participation varied greatly.

Many states are grappling with how to untangle the chaotic universe of industry-recognized credentials, and employer engagement is key to doing this.

In our [Credentials of Value](#) report, we found four common lessons from the leading states who are developing state-level processes to bring order to the credentials space. Specifically:

- Bring business and industry to the table early;
- Create a valuable review process requires concerted, cross-institutional effort;
- Differentiate credentials based on rigor and industry demand; and
- Develop systems that can be adaptive.

It's important to remember that credentials that are not recognized or accepted by employers provide negligible value, but this recognition or lack thereof may not be equal in every corner of your state. It's important to consider your state context – which employers can help provide – to understand regional differences and the type of credentials that are on the “need to have” list for employers when making hiring decisions.

Labor Market Information

Increasingly, states, school districts and postsecondary institutions are using LMI to justify creating new CTE and inform program design. This can include data on the current and projected number of openings in specific industry sectors, as well

as data on salary and any technological or policy advancements. LMI data can also be used at the state, regional or local levels. Even students can use and access LMI to encourage career awareness and exploration in priority industry sectors.

Your industry partners play an important role in validating your state's LMI. They can provide crucial context to the data, particularly as it relates to regional differences. For example, the energy sector near the coast may have very different needs than the energy field in a land-locked portion of the state.

Having employer validation of this data may also help you garner the necessary buy-in from local districts and institutions as you use LMI to inform the design, approval, re-approval or even re-design of career pathways.

Career Clusters

The National Career Cluster Framework laid the foundation for the transformation from vocational education to the CTE that we know today. The 16 Career Clusters span the full world of work and create an organizing framework for CTE in nearly every state. It can also be used as an organizing framework to form partnerships and engage employers.

An important aspect of the Career Clusters is a strong focus on the economic development and workforce priorities that ensures flexibility for states to adapt one or more of the Career Clusters to reflect key objectives, standards or priorities as it aligns to the state's broader goals.

Another critical aspect is the Framework's flexibility. Many states have modified the Career Clusters Framework to meet their state's needs and economic realities. Florida added a 17th Career Cluster in energy, based on industry demand. And Nebraska has organized the 16 Career Clusters into six career fields, which align with the state's economic development priorities.

State Examples

In **Nevada**, the state restructured its existing [Industry Sector Councils](#) to build better ownership and involvement from the business community. The Industry Councils, which consist of business, labor and education representatives, now provide recommendations on high-demand jobs, skills and education requirements to help the state meet its economic goals. The work of these councils now serves as the anchor for state-approved CTE career pathways. The councils are coordinated by the newly created Office of Workforce Innovation ([OWINN](#)), which was created by the governor and now codified in state law to prepare all K-12 students for college and career success, increase the state's postsecondary degrees and credentials, and improve employment outcomes in training programs.

In 2016, **New Jersey's** Credentials Review Board [developed](#) for the first time a common list of industry-valued credentials used by education and workforce development. The journey to create this list followed an extensive period of employer input and public comment. Having a joint list was the state's first step

toward better valuing career readiness in the state's current accountability system as well as having a process and protocol for identifying meaningful industry-recognized credentials.

Louisiana recently overhauled its high school career diploma with its [Jump Start](#) initiative. Jump Start formed regional public-private partnerships involving representatives from secondary, postsecondary and industry. These cross-sector teams helped the state develop and approve 47 graduation pathways in a variety of career fields, each culminating in an industry-recognized credential. Each pathway credential is approved and endorsed through a rigorous review process involving input from both the public and private sectors.

Key Questions: CTE Program Alignment and Validation

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
CTE Program Alignment and Validation	What mechanisms are in place to ensure diversity of industry voices when soliciting input into state CTE standards? Are there areas for improvement?	
	How are credentials of value defined and chosen in your state?	
	Does your state use different credentials lists across agencies and disciplines or is the list common across the state?	
	What role do employers play in validating and updating this list?	
	How does you use LMI to inform your state's program of study offerings?	
	How does your state use the Career Clusters? How is it used at the state and local levels? Has this structure changed over the years in your state and/or does it need to evolve?	

Partnering with Employers to Strengthen Your State CTE System

Beyond alignment, states can partner with employers in key ways to add capacity to the CTE system, such as facilitating employers' roles in providing work-based learning opportunities and serving as industry experts in the classroom.

Section 1: Work-based Learning

Work-based learning has been a longstanding feature of CTE in one form or another, and today is enjoying a renaissance of sorts as states reconsider how to use work-based learning as part of a broader strategy to prepare learners for both college and careers. At the state level, scale has always been a critical challenge to expanding work-based learning opportunities, and employers play a key role in making this a reality.

As a state leader, you can use your position and influence to review your work-based learning policies and supports and consider where you can remove barriers to encourage greater employer participation and as a result, create more opportunities for all learners to take part in these valuable experiences.

It is important to consider all learner levels as you embark on this process and take stock of your current policies and offerings, and understand the unique challenges that may face certain groups, such as learners under 18, more than others.

Helpful Resources:

[*Connecting the Classroom to Careers: A Comprehensive Guide to the State's Role in Work-based Learning*](#)

Advance CTE's comprehensive work-based learning guide provides key considerations and guiding questions to walk states through the steps of building and scaling a high-quality work-based learning system, drawing on high-quality programs and innovative strategies from across the United States.

[*Opportunities for Connecting Secondary CTE Students and Apprenticeship Programs: Report and Toolkit*](#)

This report by Advance CTE profiles eight secondary apprenticeship programs and identifies strategies to connect CTE students with apprenticeship programs. A companion toolkit provides planning guides to help state and local leaders improve these connections.

For technical assistance using these resources, please email our State Policy Manager Ashleigh McFadden at amcfadden@careertech.org. Advance CTE is happy to provide virtual and in-person technical assistance.

Work-based Learning

Options & Opportunities

Setting a Vision for Work-based Learning

By now, the idea of setting a clear vision for CTE is a message that continues to be reinforced throughout these modules. For work-based learning, this can be especially important given its place straddling the worlds of education and the workforce.

A statewide vision for work-based learning can serve as a platform for building consensus and creating common expectations with critical partners, including employers. It can also help states identify and leverage resources while ensuring that new and existing work-based learning opportunities align with related

policies and initiatives in thoughtful and intentional ways to integrate it into the broader state policy environment.

A clear, concise, well-known statewide vision should include a shared definition of work-based learning and make clear the roles of all stakeholders in helping to implement and achieve this vision. Getting this step right will make the topics that follow in this section become more straightforward.

Key Definition:

In Advance CTE's yearlong series on work-based learning, we used the following definition, which drew from the work of [WestEd](#) and its widely respected research on work-based learning and its effectiveness:

Work-based learning is a continuum of experiences that helps prepare students for postsecondary education and careers. High-quality work-based learning should begin in the early grades with activities that help build students' awareness of possible careers. This exploration continues through middle and high school with job shadowing or mentoring to better inform students' decision making, and culminates with more intensive career preparation activities such as school-based enterprises, internships and pre-apprenticeships as students move along in their career pathway from high school to postsecondary education.

Leveraging Intermediaries and Other Employer Partners

Effectively managing work-based learning opportunities requires many layers of coordination, and your employer partners are key to this. At the center is typically an intermediary, be it a school, institution or even a regional or state entity. These intermediaries' function is to support the full continuum of work-based learning and career development activities for learners. This role – independent of an instructor who has an already overflowing workload – is one of the key common elements of any successful work-based learning program because there is someone dedicated to coordinating the program, and in particular, managing the relationships between educators and employers.

State leaders should consider how it can direct funding and technical assistance to support or expand the existence of individual coordinators. Consider also your state's existing private sector organizations such as your Chamber of Commerce or Career Technical Student Organizations. These organizations often have a network of deep employer relationships who already understand CTE's value and may be primed for deeper engagement such as work-based learning. Once identified, it would be important to formalize these partnerships with an MOU or some type of clear, shared agreement of expectations and roles.

Dismantling Real and Perceived Legal Barriers

One of the clearest roles for state leaders is attending to the policy and legal infrastructure that undergirds work-based learning. Understanding what is – and isn't – allowed under state and federal law is one of the biggest barriers to employer participation in work-based learning, particularly for learners under 18.

Some states have created fact sheets and guidance to bust the myths around liability and insurance, but using a staff member as a single point of contact for these questions is critical, as this person will not only field questions but also proactively educate and develop relationships with prospective and current employer partners.

Offering Externships for Classroom Educators

Work-based learning isn't just for students. In fact, instructors can also benefit from exposure to the latest industry trends. Some states have partnered with employers to offer a different kind of professional development for CTE and academic instructors in the form of teacher externships.

Scaling Work-based Learning

Achieving scale for work-based learning has always been one of the greatest challenges for any state, and as a result, much of this responsibility historically has been left to local schools and institutions. However, with a statewide vision, a solid policy and legal infrastructure, and a network of intermediaries, you can set your state up for achieving meaningful, sustained work-based learning at scale.

State Examples

West Virginia's innovative [Simulated Workplace](#) initiative brings the workplace inside the four walls of the classroom. Students transform their classrooms into businesses to create an authentic workplace environment. One of the more innovative components is the onsite business review, which brings "inspectors" from the business community into the classroom to [evaluate](#) the programs based on their adherence to industry standards. The initiative was developed jointly between the state Department of Education and employers, specifically the state's workforce development board and state Chamber of Commerce, both of which committed funding, time and expertise to promote and evaluate the program.

Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in **Kentucky**, also known as TRACK, launched in 2013 and is a notable [example](#) of effective collaboration between the state's Labor Cabinet and Department of Education as well as employers, labor and local schools to strengthen students' career pathways and the talent pipeline. Central to the program's success is a state-level intermediary, who is employed by the state CTE office and travels the state engaging with employers and connecting them with local schools to partner together to form these youth apprenticeship programs.

As a by-product of developing the TRACK program, the state Department of Education realized employers were skittish about liability concerns. To allay those concerns, the state [partnered](#) with a national staffing agency, Adecco, which assumes the liability for the high school-age employees as well as the back-end human resources needs, thus alleviating two burdens for employers.

South Carolina's successful [Apprenticeship Carolina](#) program includes both youth and adult apprenticeships across the state. To encourage employers to take on apprentices, the state offers a [\\$1,000 tax credit](#) for companies for each apprentice they hire each year, irrespective of whether the individual is a youth or

an adult. Altogether, the state provides approximately \$1 million annually in support of Apprenticeship Carolina and the employer tax credit.

In 2016, the **Georgia** legislature passed [HB 402](#), which clarified state laws and helped give companies the comfort they needed to provide work-based learning and youth apprenticeship opportunities for students as young as 16. Moreover, the law created a financial incentive for employers to earn certification from the state Department of Education as a Work-based Learning Employer to qualify for discounts of up to 5 percent off their worker's compensation insurance.

Since 2013, **Tennessee** has offered [externships](#) to teams of CTE and general education teachers, administrators and counselors. The weeklong externship gave teachers a behind-the-scenes look at major employers in key, in-demand industries.

Key Questions: Work-based Learning

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
Work-based Learning	What state policies currently support or incentivize employer involvement work-based learning in your state? How effective are these policies, individually and collectively?	
	Are intermediaries – individuals or organizations – already in use at the secondary level in your state? If so, how and in what ways? What state-level structures and processes can be put in place to support intermediaries (e.g., state staff, professional development, certification requirements, etc.)?	
	What federal and state laws, regulations and/or guidance impact K-12 work-based learning (e.g., age requirements, nature of the work, hours worked, and compensation received)? What solutions can be found working within existing laws and regulations? Are there loopholes that can be used?	
	What legislative and/or regulatory changes need to be made to create an environment that supports work-based learning?	
	What support do employers receive when providing work-based learning? Training? Learning plan? Point of contact at state and/or local level?	

Section 2: Industry Experts in the Classroom

Every year, Advance CTE surveys State Directors to ask about their top three successes and challenges in CTE. For the past four years, recruiting and retaining quality CTE instructors has been one of the top challenges across the state. While some states have found strategies that are beginning to show promise, no one, it seems, has fully cracked this perennial issue.

However, as the interest and desire for CTE continues to increase, the need for qualified experts will only become more critical and states are recognizing that they must think more creatively beyond their traditional teacher preparation programs and alternative certification policies. Your employer partners can be a valuable asset in helping to ease some of your CTE teacher pipeline issues.

Helpful Resource:

[The State of Career Technical Education: Increasing Access to Industry Experts in High Schools](#)

This report from Advance CTE, in partnership with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at AIR, draws on data from two national surveys to examine the shortage of industry experts in secondary classrooms and how to address it.

For technical assistance using this resource, please email our State Policy Manager Ashleigh McFadden at amcfadden@careertech.org. Advance CTE is happy to provide virtual and in-person technical assistance.

Industry Experts in the Classroom

Options & Opportunities

In Advance CTE's 2016 report on bringing industry experts into the K-12 classroom, 98 percent of State Directors named this as a key priority for their state systems, both to shore up the teacher pipeline but also to ensure all learners are exposed to individuals with industry expertise. Note: This section focuses on this issue through the K-12 lens. Though the postsecondary level faces similar challenges, they have the ability to alleviate some of the pressure using the flexibility of adjunct faculty.

Key Definition:

Advance CTE defines industry experts as individuals with substantial industry knowledge and experience who possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to effectively support students and educators.

There are a number of barriers to bringing industry experts into the classroom, including geography, low industry awareness and lack of funding for increased teacher salaries, to name a few. However, with a deliberate, coordinated strategy, state leaders can begin to overcome these barriers.

Expanding teacher certification policies

The majority of states have alternative certification policies in place, which are intended to provide a faster track into the classroom than traditional teacher preparation programs offered at colleges of education. In recent years, states have begun to expand certification policies to facilitate part-time and co-teaching licenses in addition to full-time alternative certification, which can provide an easier on-ramp into the classroom for those coming from industry – or provide an

option for industry experts who want to stay in their current career but add capacity to existing CTE classrooms.

Using non-instructional roles for industry experts

There are obviously many less formal roles industry experts can play in schools – they can serve as mentors or career coaches, guiding learners through their post-high school options; volunteer with CTSOs as advisors or competition judges; or partner with schools during career days, low-intensity work-based learning opportunities or serve as guest speakers. While most of the opportunities are developed and supported at the local level, states can provide resources, guidance or training to facilitate these positions. In fact, about 50 percent of states currently have initiatives or policies underway to recruit industry experts as advisers, mentors or guest speakers.

Partnering with postsecondary faculty

Another strategy – and one particularly attractive in rural and frontier communities – is to leverage dual/concurrent enrollment policies, co-located campuses or even just flexible instructors – to share faculty across secondary and postsecondary institutions. While this may not get around certain certification requirements, it does maximize the pool of possible instructors with industry expertise.

State Examples

South Dakota [allows](#) individuals wishing to teach CTE courses to qualify for a two-year license if they hold an associate’s degree, have at least 4,000 hours of work experience or hold a nationally recognized certification in their field. Once hired, individuals join a mentorship program and participate in professional development. They can also use their industry expertise to earn specific career pathway- and Career Cluster-level endorsements allowing them to teach more advanced coursework.

Tennessee allows industry experts to have their years of experience count as teaching experience for salary purposes. As a result, these experts may enter the teaching profession at a higher salary, in hopes of coming close to the salary earned while in industry.

In **Virginia**, Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) have been an integral component of CTE programs. On the state level, employers serve as judges for state competitions and such engagement has paid off exponentially for Virginia’s CTE learners. For example, leaders from the state’s automobile dealers association initially served as CTSO judges, and after seeing the students in action, it spurred them to engage more deeply and for three decades have worked with the state on legislative advocacy, launching a statewide education partnership for automotive programs, and an MOU wherein the association provides technical assistance to schools and educators.

New Jersey is undertaking an ambitious [project](#) will employ a two-pronged approach to increasing the supply of CTE teachers: 1) Implement an Industry Fellows program to enable industry experts to co-teach on a part-time basis with experienced teachers in a CTE classroom as they decide whether they will become

a CTE teacher; and 2) Implement a CTE Teacher Bridge Program to enable general education teachers to become CTE teachers through industry externships, mentorship by an experienced CTE teacher, attainment of industry-focused content knowledge, and if available, an industry-valued credential.

Key Questions: Industry Experts in the Classroom

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
Industry Experts in the Classroom	If your state has a CTE teacher shortage, what are your state’s goals to provide in-depth experiential learning, career exploration and increase the capacity of existing teachers? What is the role of employers in helping achieve those goals?	
	What strategies do you need to put in place to achieve these goals? (This could include revisiting existing teacher certification policies, non-instructional roles, postsecondary partnerships.)	
	Once the employer role is established, how can you ensure sustainability? (such as MOUs, etc.)	

Supporting Quality Employer Engagement at the Local Level

While we have laid out numerous ways in which your state can and should engage with employers, a majority of employer engagement will take place locally with schools and institutions. Beyond a handful of anecdotes, states rarely have a mechanism to learn about the extent, intensity or quality of this engagement. However, as a state leader, you can play a role in supporting high-quality interactions with employers and help yield positive results for CTE programs of study. Additionally, you might need to help your local programs think creatively about how to overcome barriers to employer engagement in rural areas, or regions where engagement could be better streamlined to avoid employer exhaustion.

In Advance CTE's 2014 survey on employer engagement, 43 states required employers to participate on local advisory committees for CTE programs to be eligible for Perkins funding. Yet, too often, this activity is more of a box to check with a semi-regular convening where educators tell employers what they are doing while giving them few opportunities for input or influence. Other times, the composition of an advisory committee may include legacy members while missing important local or regional employers who are end-consumers for program graduates and influencers in the regional labor market.

Employers who have actively worked with your local CTE programs can also be some of your most powerful champions because they have seen up-close-and-personal how CTE works and understand the value of its investment. As a state leader, you can honor these champions as another way of lifting up the value of their contribution to CTE.

Section 1: State Policies to Support Local Employer Engagement

Your program approval and re-approval policies are a critical lever at your disposal to set a floor for employer engagement across your state. As noted above, 43 states required employer participation on program advisory committees to be eligible for Perkins funds but the extent of that involvement can vary greatly. Through your program approval and re-approval policies, you can establish clear guardrails around this type of activity.

State Policies to Support Local Employer Engagement

Options & Opportunities Review the two scenarios below for a state program approval policy as it relates to industry involvement. Then consider what your state's approval policy includes.

Scenario 1:

Local-level employer engagement is a perennial issue that the State Director is hearing about from all sides. Employers are complaining to the legislature, governor and state superintendent that there are no CTE programs in their local communities and they can't find the skilled workforce to fill their open positions. Yet, each institution in those employers' regions receives CTE funding. Additionally, local CTE programs are suffering from low enrollment and few work-based learning opportunities. Local educators are struggling to recruit employers to participate in their annual advisory committee meetings.

A quick analysis of the state's program approval policy shows that employers are required to participate on local-level advisory committees but membership composition and term lengths are not well-defined. The policy does not

adequately address how these members are selected leading to imbalanced representation of employers and associations in certain regions. Additionally, the policy lacks clarity regarding the ways that industry partners should provide input on local programs, including its design or the standards used. Other than the initial CTE program review, the policy does not require a set number of meetings or suggest any meeting objectives for advisory committees.

Scenario 2:

Employers can't stop talking about their local CTE programs and are actively stepping up to support statewide initiatives to grow and scale high-quality CTE across the state. As they talk with legislators and the governor, employers give clear examples of how they worked shoulder-to-shoulder with their local CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels to design and validate quality programs that are churning out engaged, well-prepared graduates who are receiving offer letters the same day as their diplomas.

As part of the newly revised state program approval policy, local-level advisory committees must use a clear and transparent process and memorandum of understanding (or an equivalent), with participants who represent a diversity of local or regional industry and requirements for regular structured interactions and consistent attendance.

Additionally, input from industry partners is required at key points throughout the design and validation process for all new CTE programs, including the revision of standards and design of experiential learning opportunities. Moreover, the state policy requires a clear expectation and timeline for ongoing engagement with industry partners, including reviews of course standards and CTE program outcomes.

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While these two scenarios – drawn from Advance CTE's [Policy Benchmark Tool](#), where it details industry involvement and collaboration in emerging and strong policies – may show the extreme ends of employer engagement and local advisory committees, they should provide some insights into key elements and outcomes of a successful program approval policy, and related state supports.

During program re-approval and other monitoring, states can collect local examples and best practices for employer engagement. In the 2014 survey, less than half of states monitored or captured programs' employer partnership activities in any way. However, using these monitoring opportunities for more than compliance can pay dividends for your state. It can help you uncover best practices that could be compiled into a clearinghouse and then shared widely with other programs to replicate.

State Examples

Tennessee shifted its monitoring practices from a scheduled four-year rotation of monitoring of secondary Perkins sub-recipients to a system that was fully based on risk, using established [quality program indicators](#). This also provided a time that state staff could push the message of support and technical assistance. As

part of this shift, state staff also are able to collect examples of local employer engagement and other practices to share.

Minnesota uses a consortium model to deliver CTE statewide. The model uses the [Rigorous Programs of Study framework](#), which includes strong employer partnerships. According to the state’s CTE office, a fully developed, high-quality program of study must include a written MOU with all consortia partners, including secondary and postsecondary CTE and employers. Having these MOUs enables the state to collect and track information about employer-educators partnerships happening at the local level.

New York’s recently approved state plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act indicates that the state plans to require schools and districts to incorporate input from community partners – who may offer CTE and career readiness activities – as they developed a comprehensive needs assessment related to their school improvement designation.

Key Questions: State Policies to Support Local Employer Engagement

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
State Policies to Support Local Employer Engagement	Looking back at the scenarios above, which one better represents your state? Why?	
	How do your existing program approval policies touch on employer engagement?	
	Does your state collect and share local best practices regarding employer engagement? How do you help LEAs and institutions improve the ways in which they engage with and use employers?	
	How are employers involved at the local level during the design and validation phase of a program that is new or up for re-approval?	

Section 2: Local Advisory Committees

As made clear above, CTE advisory committees can help create a strong infrastructure for local program success. Along with a strong program approval policy, states can play an important role in helping strengthen these committees through guidance and other supports.

Local Advisory Committees

Options & Opportunities

Local advisory committees can include a range of key individuals, including secondary and postsecondary partners as well as employers and community leaders. Employers who agree to participate on local advisory programs are not just doing so because it is the right thing to do. They are balancing multiple priorities and will want to see a return on investment for the time they spend on these committees. At the state level, there are a few ways that you can help move these local advisory bodies from perfunctory to productive.

First, know what these local advisory committees look like across your state. True programs of study scale learner levels, but how many of these local advisory committees are shared by secondary and postsecondary programs? Is there a need for regional coordination and if so, what form would that take? Should each individual program of study have its own advisory committee or can they be pooled across programs within a single Career Cluster, or even shared school, district or institution wide? As states continue to call for more and more alignment to employer and labor market demand, it's also imperative that the "asks" of employers are streamlined to maximize their time and input efficiently.

Many states opt to develop written guidance, criteria and toolkits that local educators can use when developing or strengthening local advisory committees. Consider how you can make these guides interactive and more than a static PDF. The more tangible and actionable the information, the easier it will be for local educators to use. Related to this, states can and should identify those advisory committees that exemplify the kind of partnerships you want to see at the local level and provide professional development to other local leaders on how to replicate such successes.

Finally, consider, too, how you can use your state-level connections to facilitate introductions between regional industry associations and local schools and institutions whose program advisory bodies are missing key employer representation.

State Examples

North Carolina is reinventing the local advisory committee structure through its new [initiative](#) to develop career pathways through regional alliances of employers, community colleges and K-12 institutions. In fact, as a first step, employers were brought to the table for and serve as integral players in the design and creation of the pathways.

Colorado developed a comprehensive, web-based toolkit for local advisory committees [here](#).

Oregon conducted a survey of its local advisory committees to better understand the landscape, gaps and places where the state could help support. Read the report [here](#).

In 2012, **New Jersey** established its [Talent Networks](#) in seven priority industries to better align industry and education systems. The networks consist of industry experts and are led by colleges, universities and business organizations, and the networks partner with local employers to gather “industry intelligence” and work with the Department of Education, local school districts and community colleges to support secondary and postsecondary CTE programs.

Key Questions: Local Advisory Committees

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
Local Advisory Committees	Think back to the professional development and technical assistance you offer year-round. How and in what ways can this be used to help educators strengthen their skills around employer engagement and building strong local advisory committees?	
	Does your state have criteria or guidance for what a high-quality local advisory committee looks like and does?	
	How do regional initiatives and other employer-led bodies connect with and inform local CTE programs? Do these connections operate separately from local advisory committees or serve to replace them?	

Section 3: Cultivating CTE Champions

Employers who engage with CTE at the state and local levels can be your greatest advocates and champions. Learning how to leverage these champions on your behalf can be a powerful tool.

Cultivating CTE Champions

Options & Opportunities

As a state leader, you may interact with some of your state's largest or most influential employers through your state workforce board, Chamber of Commerce or industry associations. Yet, turning these employers into champions for your vision for CTE may require some strategy or structure.

By recruiting employer champions, you can leverage their voice and input at the state and local levels, encourage them to use their bully pulpit with other advocates and policymakers, and, perhaps most importantly, leverage those champions to further recruit more employers to engage in the CTE system.

There are a number of ways states can cultivate and recruit these champions, including inviting them to serve on statewide advisory committees, participate in CTE site visits or serve as judges at state CTSO competitions.

But just recruiting champions may not be enough - recognizing these employers for their support is also important. Some states have developed awards programs where they will recognize employers for a range of activities and contributions toward their state CTE system.

One key point to remember: though many employers often see the value of CTE, the way in which they talk about and promote CTE may actually be counterproductive. Building relationships with these employers means learning to speak their language and demonstrating how your state's CTE programs are working to meet their needs.

Check out these Advance CTE resources to help learn the language of business and industry:

- [*In Their Words: Why Business Leaders Support CTE, Career Pathways and Career Academies*](#)
- [*Putting Real-World Skills to Work: An Employer Guide for Making the Case for CTE*](#)
- [*Making a Winning Case for CTE: How State Leaders Can Put This Research to Work*](#)

State Examples

The **Kansas** Board of Regents' [*Employer Engagement Initiative*](#) allows the state's technical and community colleges to nominate key employer supporters for recognition. The initiative has three tiers – Champion, Partner and Supporter – and has recognized nearly 350 employers across the state. Qualifying activities range from prioritizing residents with credentials for hiring and offering internships for students or faculty to participating in career fairs and general advocacy. Colleges nominate the employers using set criteria and the Board of Regents will send a certificate and post the employer's name on its website.

Alabama was able to develop deep relationships with the state's leading employers, who in turn used their influence to lobby the state legislature to pass

the [21st Century Workforce Act](#) in 2013. The bond initiative directed \$50 million to transform Alabama’s CTE programs to align with the state’s in-demand industries.

Through the [Business Friends of Education](#) (BFoE) program, a statewide recognition and award program for employers, **Wisconsin** is incentivizing businesses to participate in local career development initiatives. Businesses can apply or be nominated for BFoE recognition if they’ve partnered with local school districts to provide opportunities for career development, volunteering or training, mentoring, and work-based learning. They can also be recognized for providing schools with services, materials, or supplies. To encourage continued engagement, the Wisconsin Department of Education plans to develop supports—including a communications toolkit for engaging schools—for BFoE recipients. The state has set a goal is to recognize 250 BFoEs by the end of 2019.

Key Questions: Cultivating CTE Champions

Answer the questions below in the space provided. While these questions are all optional, we encourage you to capture your thoughts here so that you can easily refer back to them.

	Key Questions	State Response
Cultivating CTE Champions	Do you have any formal programs to recognize particularly active employers or industry partners? What would it take to create such a program?	
	Can you identify your top 10 employer partners? What makes them stand out? What would it take for them to recruit 10 more?	
	Does the state provide site visits or other tour opportunities for employers or policymakers?	

Final Reflections & Next Steps

Post-Module Survey

Please take this brief post-module assessment to let us know what you learned and how we can help:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NewSDpost-test>

Next Steps

It's important to keep the momentum of what you have unpacked through this module. We encourage you to commit to a timeline of what you plan to do in 30, 60 and 90 days. See the helpful chart provided to you in Appendix A.

Most importantly, it is our sincerest hope that you already have a list of concrete actions you will take as a result of this module. Some may be small steps or changes you can make today while others may require you to build a cohesive plan for more dramatic shifts in the future. Just know that we at Advance CTE stand ready to help as critical friends, content experts, and providers of professional development and technical assistance.

Appendix A: Planning Chart

Employer Engagement High-level Goals and Action Steps

Immediate (Next 0-3 Months)		
<u>Main Goals/Priorities</u>	<u>Action Steps</u> (Planned)	<u>Potential Concerns</u> (Related to goals and/or action steps)
1.	•	•
2.	•	•
3.	•	•
Intermediate (Next 4-9 Months)		
<u>Main Goals/Priorities</u>	<u>Action Steps</u> (Planned)	<u>Potential Concerns</u> (Related to goals and/or action steps)
1.	•	•
2.	•	•
3.	•	•
Long-term (Next 10-18 Months)		
<u>Main Goals/Priorities</u>	<u>Action Steps</u> (Planned)	<u>Potential Concerns</u> (Related to goals and/or action steps)
1.	•	•
2.	•	•
3.	•	•