CTE WITHOUT BORDERS

Preparing the Landscape, System and Partners for Expanded Access

To truly meet the needs of learners, we must remove the geographic barriers that limit access and opportunity, particularly for learners in rural communities.

This work is essential to ensure that each learner can access CTE without borders — one of the five principles of Advance CTE's *Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education*. Policies and programs should enable, not limit, mobility and access. States should come together to develop and expand new models of collaboration by investing in expanded-access systems that allow access both within and across states.

Achieving CTE without borders will require significant policy and programmatic changes to how CTE is designed and delivered. To support state and local leaders in the development of policies and programs that advance the expansion of CTE and work-based learning within and across states, Advance CTE, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education partnered to create this CTE Without Borders Policy Playbook. The playbook was developed with input from more than 100 state and local leaders through a series of interactive roundtable discussions and interviews.

This policy playbook focuses on expanded access both within and across states and within and across secondary and postsecondary institutions. With a combination of key strategies, actions and policies across six focus areas, leaders can actualize expanded access within and across states to support learners' and industry's needs.

The design of expanded access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning requires alignment with the state's or region's context. Every state and region is different, and it is not expected that all the playbook strategies will be adopted in whole. Rather, consider leveraging this resource as a choose-your-own-adventure based on the governance and regulatory approaches in your state or region.

Leaders should leverage this resource to evaluate their CTE systems and discern where in their partnerships, systems, policies and practices they have opportunities to expand access within and across states to meet learners' and industry's needs. The strategies and actions in this playbook will support leaders as they determine the scope of this work for their state or region and understand where they have opportunities to prioritize various policy efforts to actualize CTE without borders.

ADVANCE>>CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

WICHE
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

SREB | Southern Regional Education Board

FOCUS AREAS

The following focus areas guide leaders through strategies and actions to develop policies and practices within and across systems, agencies and institutions to expand access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states. These focus areas provide leaders with an understanding of the full system of policies and supports necessary to expand access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning. These strategies and actions rely on partnerships among K-12 institutions, postsecondary institutions and systems, state agencies, workforce development and industry and employer partners to connect policies and practices to each other and should be informed by comprehensive data, focused on learner outcomes, and designed with equity in mind.

The focus areas are not intended to be, nor are they reflective of, one-year initiatives. For the best results, they require a multi-year approach that each state and/or leader should tailor to their needs and specific goals and continually revisit and revise over time.

| Align Partners, Values and Vision | Drive Decisions With Data | Incentivize Access With Flexible and Sustainable Funding | Capture Learners' Credits, Credentials and Experiences | Optimize the Conditions for Virtual and Hybrid Learning Opportunities | Inform and Support Learners and Families |

Additionally, because each state operates within a different structure and context, some strategies and actions lend themselves to expanding access only at secondary institutions, postsecondary institutions or within states or across states, while other strategies may encompass more than one area of expanded access. The following keys are identified throughout the playbook to help navigate the strategies and actions.

Expands Secondary Access

Expands Postsecondary Access

Expands In-State Access

Expands Cross-State Access

This is the second of a four-part series comprising the CTE Without Borders Policy Playbook. These first two sections prepare leaders seeking to expand access within and across states to identify the partners and champions needed to drive the work forward and assess their current CTE systems to understand the opportunities available to actualize expanded access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning.

Align Partners, Values and Vision

Actualizing Career Technical Education (CTE) without borders will require leadership at all levels, within and across states, to partner in new ways to leverage the policies, funding, programs, practices and resources to support expanded access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning. As such, agencies, institutions and organizations that are partnering should both strategically identify leaders who can move the work forward efficiently and align all partners on the values and vision to guide this work.

When engaging in a new initiative, strategic partnerships typically experience the following risks: misaligned objectives, poor communication practices among partners, poor governance processes, and partners' inability to identify and quickly make the changes needed for the partnership to succeed.[1] To mitigate these risks and effectively advance CTE without borders, leaders should consider:

- **Mapping critical leadership partners, agencies, institutions, systems and organizations;**

- **Cultivating and maintaining meaningful working relationships;**

- **Defining the issue and setting a vision;**

- **Establishing a comprehensive memorandum of understanding (MOU);**

- **Identifying mid-management champions from agencies, institutions, organizations and industry;**

- **Clearly articulating roles and responsibilities;**

- **Setting goals and developing an action plan; and**

- **Engaging in ongoing communication and improvement.**

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS to Align Partners, Values and Vision

MAP CRITICAL LEADERSHIP PARTNERS, AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, SYSTEMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

A key first step is undertaking an asset mapping process to identify the partners, agencies, institutions, systems and organizations that can move the work of expanding access forward efficiently and effectively. Asset mapping provides the opportunity to build a shared understanding of the collective knowledge, skills, resources and capacity that are available to begin to move toward CTE without borders.

Leadership from the governor and state agencies down to local districts, institutions and postsecondary systems are integral to ensure alignment of expanded access and enhance flexibility to meet learner and industry needs. Gubernatorial partnerships and alignment are especially important when expanding access across state lines. Driving this work forward both within and across states will require a champion; the support of the governor signals that advancing and pursuing expanded access is a priority and incentivizes partners to invest and engage in the initiative. Equally important is institutionalizing the work within a well-defined and empowered committee. A codified committee that is at the state level; includes cross-sector membership from the state government, labor and employers; and has decision-making authority is critical to progress and sustainability.

Partnerships should also be inclusive of all stakeholders, including industry and employers. Asset mapping is a crucial first step in understanding the abilities of all stakeholders and partners to provide expanded access. Clearly articulating the capabilities of all partners and stakeholders helps to identify the strengths of each partner and provides the space to understand where additional resources, partnerships or supports are needed. When asset mapping, leaders should list all partners, define the boundaries of each partner, and determine which assets to include from each partner to support expanded access within and across states.

Rhode Island leveraged a consultant to assist in the completion of its asset mapping process for the PrepareRI initiative. The asset map identified all funding and work streams in the state that would be implicated in the work of PrepareRI. The consultants also identified strategies to improve learner access to career-focused programming. A full example of the PrepareRI asset map can be found in the **PrepareRI action plan** in Appendix T on pages 342-368.[2]

LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS TO EXPAND ACCESS WITHIN AND ACROSS STATES

A champion will be crucial for the advancement and successful implementation of CTE without borders. Throughout the playbook, verbiage is used to identify champions and key players that will assist in advancing expanded access within and across states. These terms are defined in the playbook as follows:

Convening Authority:
A champion for this work, preferably at the state level such as a governor or state agency.

Essential Partners:
Cross-agency partners that support the work of expanded access with resources, skills, access to information, alignment across systems and more. Involved agencies can include state education agencies, workforce departments, higher education departments, local education agencies, economic development cabinets and more.

Core Team:
The team of individuals from each of the essential partner organizations and agencies that meet regularly and execute the work of expanding access. This team will be the main drivers of the work taking place to expand access within and across states.

CULTIVATE AND MAINTAIN MEANINGFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Cultivating and maintaining authentic relationships with a *people-first approach* can establish a foundation for meaningful partnerships that lend themselves to working through and mitigating barriers throughout the process of expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning. A people-first approach refers to leaders caring for team members first and foremost, even before metrics and outcomes.[3]

To achieve a people-first approach, the convening authority for this work should establish a culture among the team that fosters autonomy, accountability and responsibility; makes each individual feel valued and trusted; and promotes creativity. Through the lens of expanded access, each partner is the expert from their institution and should be respected as a necessary component to ensure that learners' and industry's needs are met in the short and long terms. The voices of each partner must be heard and valued to ensure that each partner feels appreciated and important in the work of expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning.

DEFINE THE ISSUE AND SET A VISION

When defining the issue and making the case for the need for expanded access, leveraging multiple methodologies (i.e., quantitative and qualitative data) is crucial. The data and language used when making the case should be intentional and clearly articulate the value and opportunities available through CTE with expanded access. Learner and industry voices should be leveraged as the core beneficiaries of expanded access.

The convening authority for this work should collaborate with partners to articulate the barriers to meeting learner and industry needs from each partner's respective positionality — it is important to clarify for each partner how the issue affects their locus of control, institutional goals and overarching success.

Once the issue is clearly defined and the case is made for all stakeholders and core partners, the core team should also define the vision for expanded access and what each stakeholder would like to see as a result of expanded access for learners, secondary and postsecondary providers and workforce and industry. This work can establish how bold the state wants to be. For example, the state may want to create open access across K-12 districts only for certain CTE programs. Or the state may want to fully open borders and allow full cross-state access to neighboring states. This aligned vision is the north star for this work and must be central to the actions and decisions made to align the systems, agencies, institutions and organizations supporting expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning.

ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE MOU

An MOU is a critical document establishing the coordinated efforts across agencies and institutions working in partnership to expand access. Whether expanding access within or across states, leaders should consider creating a clear MOU that identifies how partnering agencies will address funding, data sharing, accountability, credit transfer and more.

When initiating the development of an MOU for expanded access, leaders should consider leveraging experts, such as non-partisan organizations that specialize in public finance and economic development, to assist in developing a process and common template for all partner agencies and to inform the funding-stream asset map to prevent duplication and non-aligned funding work. Experts in this area can provide a comprehensive map of funding in the state; make recommendations for how to reorganize and align funding more effectively to deliver CTE across borders; and provide real-time, actionable data to inform future budgets. An example of an MOU to assist in expanding access can be found in the **PrepareRI action plan** in Appendix U on pages 369-375.[4]

IDENTIFY MID-MANAGEMENT CHAMPIONS FROM AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND INDUSTRY

Leaders from each of the essential partner agencies and organizations should be in a role that allows them to make critical decisions and have enough time to dedicate to the work involved in expanding access for learners. Ideally, identified individuals from partner agencies and organizations should be mid-level managers with decision-making authority who will champion the work at their respective agencies to ensure that the work is sustained irrespective of personnel transitions.

Such individuals make valuable contributions in the face of system and organizational change. These managers can help generate entrepreneurial ideas; are skilled with leveraging informal networks to make substantive, lasting change possible; are attuned to staff needs to ensure that initiative momentum is maintained; and can help manage the tension between continuity and change.[5] These individuals can constitute the core group that drives the work forward within and across organizations (including within and across state lines).

CLEARLY ARTICULATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Once all core partners are identified, invested in and committed to expanding access and the core group is established to lead the work, the convening authority should indicate how the core group will function and how responsibilities will be shared among partners. Clarity in roles and responsibilities is critical to accomplishing the complex work of expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states. Research shows that change programs and initiatives with governance structures that clearly identify roles and responsibilities are more than six times more likely to succeed.[6] Additionally, establishing a structure for the group will ensure that the core group will operate efficiently and effectively.

CROSS-SECTOR AGENCIES AND SERVICE DELIVERY: PrepareRI

PrepareRI, an initiative of the Rhode Island state government, in partnership with businesses, schools, universities and non-profits across the state, is providing learners with open access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning opportunities. During their planning, the convening authority, partners and cross-sector agencies identified their roles and responsibilities for service delivery as they provide expanded access for learners. The snapshot below, taken from the Action Plan, shows the identification of agencies and partners and how they will support components of expanded access. Full PrepareRI Action Plans can be found on the **PrepareRI website**.[7]

Cross-Sector Agencies/Structures Involved in the New Skills for Youth Initiative

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)
Service Delivery: Career and Technical Education (CTE) - RIDE oversees state funding and advises the Board of Education on program accountability. **Advanced Coursework Network (ACN)** - Virtual learning network that offers coursework to all districts from LEA, Community, and public and private higher education providers.

Department of Labor and Training (DLT)
Service Delivery: **Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) - RJRI** is a demand-driven model of workforce development. The initiative, now in its second year, is collaborative, flexible, and most-importantly, business-led. One of the RJRI Partnerships with Electric Boat is utilizing RJRI to map backwards to achieve vertical alignment from employer needs through postsecondary and high school programs.

Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC)
Service Delivery: **Dual and Concurrent Enrollment**- Provides funding for qualifying students to take college courses from Rhode Island's public higher education institutions as part of their high school requirements at no cost to the student or family.

SET GOALS AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Implementing expanded access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning will require strategic planning across all agencies and partners. When entering this stage, leaders should be aware of the time developing a plan will take and keep inertia in mind.

Successful strategic plans for expanding access are developed to match the organizational structures across the essential partners' and the core team's institutions and agencies. Developing strategic plans with this approach ensures cohesion across the various partner agencies, institutions and organizations and prevents impediments to accomplishing milestones and goals.

As action plans are developed, leaders should consider the timelines necessary to achieve CTE without borders. A state hoping to achieve expanded access may develop a five-year action plan. That plan should then include yearly milestones, six-month priorities, and monthly monitoring systems and processes to ensure that all partners and stakeholders complete the plan with fidelity.

When developing the action plan, leaders should consider the following guiding questions:

- What can begin immediately?

- What can happen later?

- What could be labor intensive, require a significant amount of time, or require resources such as additional personnel or funding?

- What steps could have multiple rollout dates as part of a comprehensive phase-in?

- What actions and items may require state board or legislative approval? How does the action plan account for these set calendars and schedules?

- How much earlier must specific action items be completed to be reviewed and/or approved for timely rollouts?

- What cross-agency or cross-state agreements (i.e., data-sharing agreements or MOU) will require extended time to be approved?

EXPANDED ACCESS IS LEARNER-CENTERED POLICY: EXPANDED ACCESS IN KANSAS

In 2022, the **Kansas** governor signed _House Bill 2567_ into law. This law provides an open enrollment policy that allows families to enroll their children in any public school that has space available, even if they do not live in the district, starting in the 2024-25 school year; gives families the flexibility to enroll their children in school part time, allowing them to access multiple learning options based on their individual needs; and allows students to earn course credits for outside-the-classroom learning, including community programs, internships and apprenticeship programs that prepare students for future careers, as approved by school districts including community programs, internships and apprenticeship programs that prepare students for future careers, as approved by school districts.[8,9]

Leaders in Kansas who championed and helped to move this legislation over the finish line shared the importance of aligning all partners, values and vision to recognize that Kansas has a skills gap: The state needs workers and a future pipeline of workers with the skills to meet labor demands. Getting this law passed required leaders to leverage data to make the case and clearly articulate the issue the state is facing in terms of labor and workforce development. Leaders also had to identify and lay out how all agencies and partners (e.g., CTE leaders, leaders of higher education, and leaders of the K-12 education system) could work together to develop a clear plan to implement policies to meet the needs of learners and state economic development. Collaboration and effective partnerships across agencies are critical in this work, and as expanded access is actualized in the state of Kansas, leaders will continue to collaborate to maintain quality in their CTE system.

ENGAGE IN ONGOING COMMUNICATION AND IMPROVEMENT

As partners work together to achieve expanded access, the core team should develop ongoing feedback loops to ensure clear communication structures. This core team should meet regularly to discuss progress, opportunities, challenges and priorities aligned with the action plan. In addition, the leaders and executives of essential partner organizations and institutions should meet often with the core team to remain informed about key decisions and to maintain engagement in the initiative.

Each partner in the work should see themselves and their institutions reflected in the plans, priorities and ongoing evaluation of progress related to the initiative. It is imperative that these leaders and the partners within the core team understand, preferably through data, the accomplishments being achieved as well as the impact of the initiative to encourage expanding access and sustain the work over time.

Clear and effective communication should not be solely for essential partners and executives of partnering institutions and organizations; leaders should also develop a messaging strategy for addressing changes and ensure that these key messages are shared with local educators, learners, families and communities.

Ongoing evaluation and strategic planning for continuous improvement should also be a regular practice within the core team. As implementation for expanded access begins, the team should continually evaluate the effectiveness of learners engaging in CTE programs within and across states. The process of continuous improvement should leverage quantitative and qualitative data that speaks to the learner experience and access to and success within expanded CTE programs and work-based learning opportunities.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT Aligning Partners, Values and Vision

- **Building Cross-Sector Partnerships to Support Career and Technical Education: A Playbook for State Policymakers** (Excel*in*Ed)
- **Commission on Strategic Partnerships for Work-Ready Students: Partnerships to Align Education and Careers** (Southern Regional Education Board)
- **Connecting Community Colleges With Employers: A Toolkit for Building Successful Partnerships** (The Brookings Institution)
- **Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships Toolkit** (Community Toolbox)
- **PrepareRI Action Plans** (PrepareRI)
- **Strengthening Career Pathways Through the Power of State and Local Partnerships** (Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group)

Drive Decisions With Data

Large-scale initiatives commonly run into delays when attempting to align multiple partners and institutions on metrics, data systems and data-sharing agreements. These complications can hinder the expansion of CTE and work-based learning within and across states and prevent the CTE community from evolving to adequately meet learners' and industry's needs. Without high-quality and accessible data, leaders cannot know how learners are faring, where there are gaps, and how to support learners and institutions to fill these gaps. Data is a key component in knowing what needs further investigation and support.[10]

To fully leverage data to successfully expand access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states, leaders should consider:

- **Completing an audit of existing CTE programs for quality and access;**
- **Leveraging labor market information (LMI) to meet labor demands across broader regions and states;**
- **Building and expanding data-sharing agreements;**
- **Ensuring interoperability across data and information systems; and**
- **Expanding current data systems to capture open access metrics.**

While data can be a lever to help monitor accountability in CTE without borders, more information, strategies and actions to address accountability can be found in the Capture Learners' Credits, Credentials and Experiences section in this playbook.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS to Drive Decisions With Data

COMPLETE AN AUDIT OF EXISTING CTE PROGRAMS FOR QUALITY AND ACCESS

A robust CTE program audit can support the asset mapping phase of expanding access by equipping leaders with an understanding of the current quality of and access to existing programs. An audit provides the opportunity to examine the degree to which programs and work-based learning opportunities are providing learners with returns on investment in the form of economic mobility and career success.[11] Understanding the returns on investment can inform leaders about ways they can leverage the strengths of neighboring states and regions to fill any gaps in programs, determine guidelines for indicators of program quality, and support states' recurring activities to review and affirm CTE programs to ensure efficient use of resources.

To perform an audit, leaders should prepare by establishing the purpose and priorities of the audit. Through the lens of expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning, leaders should articulate purpose statements that seek to answer:

- *What CTE programs does our [state/region/district/institution] provide that allow learners to achieve economic mobility and career success?*
- *How accessible are the programs and work-based learning opportunities that allow learners to achieve economic mobility and career success? Specifically, which learners have access to which high-quality programs and work-based learning opportunities across the state/region/district/institution? Which learners do not have access to these programs, with a focus on learners with special population status or other historically marginalized learners?*
- *Are the programs and work-based learning opportunities provided to learners closely aligned to labor market needs?*

This work at the beginning of this process is imperative to help all agencies, institutions and partners receive data and analyses that are aligned with the intentions of the audit: preparing the community for expanded access within and across states for learners.

Lastly, leaders should leverage the results and use them to inform action plans to expand access. A well-designed and well-executed audit will inform leaders about policy and program recommendations to improve CTE programs. It also will provide baselines for measuring the impact of providing expanded access on the states, regions, districts and institutions participating in the initiative. This information will also be particularly useful in making the case for a policy shift to expand access across borders.

UNPACKING HIGH-QUALITY DATA: THE SIX CORE ELEMENTS OF A HIGH-QUALITY CAREER READINESS DATA ECOSYSTEM

High-quality data is imperative for any successful CTE ecosystem, especially when expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning opportunities for learners. Advance CTE's **Career Readiness Data Quality and Use Policy Benchmark Tool** describes six core elements of a high-quality career readiness data ecosystem and highlights recommended actions state leaders can take to improve the quality and effective use of career readiness data across education levels.[12] The benchmark tool includes case studies, an assessment to help state leaders identify strengths and areas for improvement, and worksheets for creating a plan of action to improve the quality and effective use of career readiness data.

Six Core Elements of a High-Quality Career Readiness Data Ecosystem

1. Data is collected consistently and accurately

2. Processes and protocols are in place to ensure effective data governance

3. Data systems, policies and practices are fully aligned across agencies and learner levels

4. Information is relevant, timely and disaggregated

5. Practitioners and the public are equipped to understand and leverage data

6. Information is used effectively to promote quality and equity in career pathways

LEVERAGE LMI TO MEET LABOR DEMANDS ACROSS BROADER REGIONS AND STATES

LMI is a critical component of designing, implementing and updating CTE programs.[13] When expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states, leaders should leverage LMI to justify the need for CTE programs and pathways to ensure that learners have opportunities for careers with family-sustaining wages after program completion.
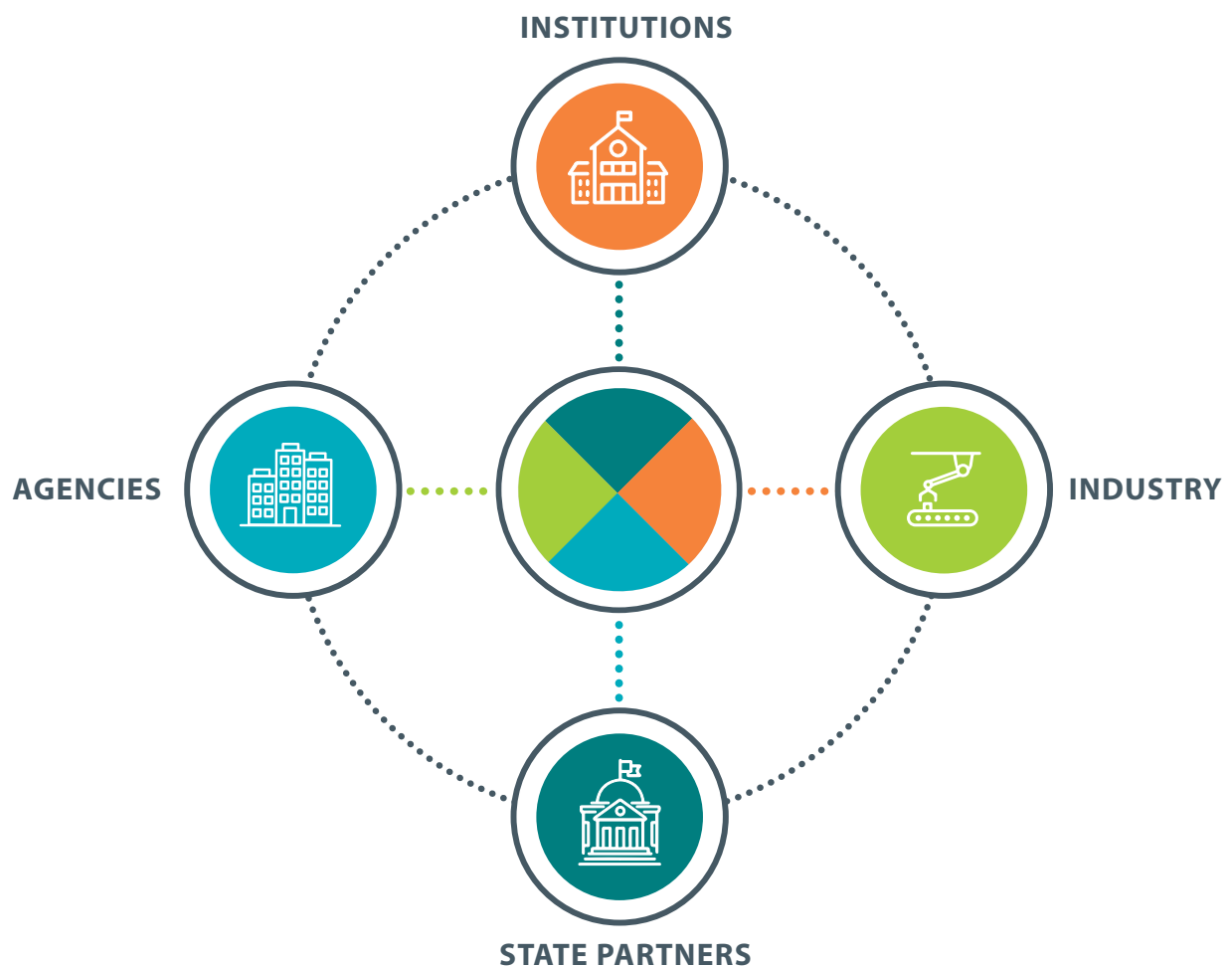
Partners within and across states should share LMI and establish program reciprocity. Too often, state or local leaders rely on LMI only from their state, rather than a region that may cover more than one state. Determining the LMI most appropriate for in-state and cross-state access will require the collaboration of all partners involved in expanding access. To fully leverage LMI to inform partners within and across states, leaders should ensure that the data is shared in a way that is both easy to use and accurate.

LMI can also inform leaders about any gaps in program offerings. When shared with leaders within and across states, this information can further justify partnerships to expand access to programs and work-based learning opportunities for learners.

Partners within and across states should share LMI

INSTITUTIONS

AGENCIES

INDUSTRY

STATE PARTNERS

BUILD AND EXPAND DATA-SHARING AGREEMENTS

A significant component of expanding access within and across states is robust data-sharing agreements across the agencies, institutions and partners working together. Often, partners face challenges reaching agreements for sharing data, are averse to sharing data due to privacy concerns, and experience considerable lags in the time needed to finalize data-sharing agreements — challenges that can be further exacerbated when operating across state borders. However, well-executed data-sharing agreements can support the community to achieve expanded access for learners. Leveraging leadership and champions for expanded access, including governors, legislators and system leaders, can help move agreements forward and mitigate some of the challenges and apprehensions commonly associated with data-sharing agreements.

Within the scope of CTE without borders, data-sharing agreements should enable and sustain the sharing of data and coordination among cross-sector agencies to enable states to achieve their expanded access goals. Robust data-sharing agreements can help leaders determine how successfully learners are engaging in expanded access; achieving in their programs; and securing employment in high-skill, high-demand fields after program completion and/or graduation.

At the onset of their work to expand access, all partners, within and across states, should establish thorough agreements to share and continually review and analyze data related to learners' access to, success in and outcomes from CTE programs and work-based learning opportunities.

California leveraged robust data-sharing agreements across the state during phase one of the New Skills for Youth initiative, a five-year initiative funded by JPMorgan Chase & Co. aimed at strengthening career-focused education starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees or credentials aligned with high-skill jobs.[14] In phase one of the initiative, the state conducted a needs assessment that revealed the need to disaggregate career pathways data to evaluate program outcomes.[15] California's previous inability to disaggregate data was due to the need for increased data collection and sharing, such as through a federated data system, and the need for shared definitions across the state.[16] With the release of the LaunchBoard Accountability System, which provides California community colleges data on employment outcomes for learners graduating from CTE programs,

EXPANDING ACCESS *AND* DATA TRANSPARENCY: MEANINGFULLY REPORTING ON CAREER-FOCUSED INDICATORS

As leaders endeavor to implement robust data-sharing agreements to expand access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states, they should also consider how the data is shared with stakeholders including teachers, school leaders, learners and their families.

Leveraging shared data across agencies and partners can inform the development of tools that transparently share information about CTE programs within and across states, including how these programs are aligned to high-wage, high-demand careers and the knowledge, skills and paths to those careers. **Tennessee**, **Rhode Island** and **Utah** have demonstrated their commitment to data transparency and have used existing state data to power an interactive tool called Launch My Career.[20] The tool is designed for individuals and institutions and has been implemented in states to ensure that more individuals have access to information about the return on investment of higher education institutions and of the majors and degree programs within these institutions.[21] In partnership with the American Institutes for Research, the tool uses aggregated wage data of graduates as well as data from multiple other sources to meaningfully report career-focused indicators on an annual basis. The indicators are updated as much as possible in real time and disaggregated by demographic information. For the latest iteration, see **Launch My Career Utah**. [22]

LAUNCH MY CAREER

the state made progress toward linking data systems across secondary and postsecondary education and employment to monitor student outcomes. The system was made available by state legislation that requires the Department of Consumer Affairs to share data with the community college system.[17,18]

When building agreements across institutions and partners to share learner-level data, leaders should ensure that they and their partners take the necessary steps to protect student privacy by complying with local, state and federal data privacy requirements. Conversations about data privacy should begin as early as possible, as different partners may be subject to different data privacy requirements that affect their ability to collect and share information at the learner level.

Statewide intermediaries can support expanded access through connections to employers, resources and more. The Attainment Network, a statewide intermediary in **Colorado** supporting the development and implementation of career pathways and a *New Skills ready network* site lead for Denver, Colorado, requires all partners joining its initiatives to sign an MOU and data-sharing agreement to ensure that the data they need to track all learner outcomes in CTE and career programs is accessible. The Attainment Network is developing a data framework to analyze, with a focus on equity, learners' success in CTE programs and career pathways. As leaders work to expand access to CTE programs and work-based learning opportunities for learners, requiring partners to sign these agreements is a promising approach to ensure that there is no lag in data collection.

An example of a data-sharing agreement across the Department of Education, Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, Department of Labor and Training, Governor's Workforce Board, Executive Office of Commerce and Department of Revenue can be found in the **PrepareRI action plan** in Appendix O on pages 266-276.[19]

ENSURE INTEROPERABILITY ACROSS DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

As institutions and partners work together to expand access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning, systems, especially school information systems, should confirm interoperability to ensure shared access to relevant data. Interoperability supports seamless data sharing to monitor CTE program outcomes and areas where learners, 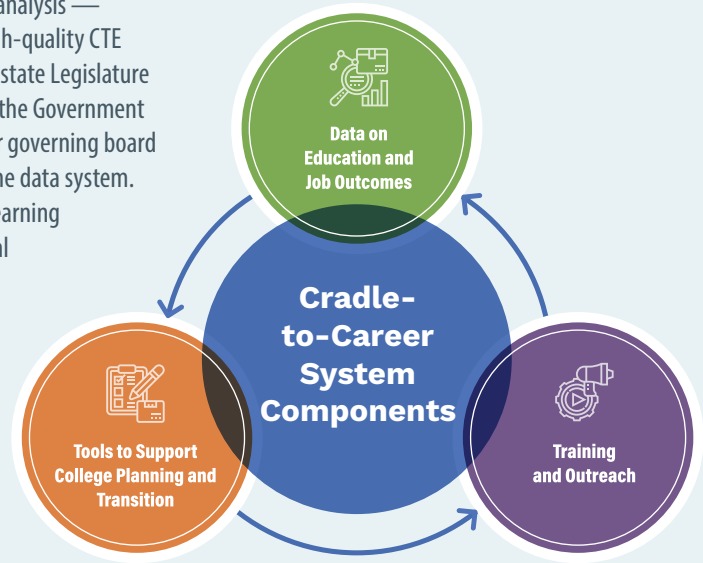institutions and employers may need additional support or technical assistance. Given that adopting a new, shared data system is not possible for most states and communities, leaders should work toward aligning current systems as closely as possible, including the data collected, shared, analyzed and disseminated across partners.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR DATA: LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEMS

Longitudinal data systems enable valuable cross-agency data sharing and analysis — a critical component of a strong data system when expanding access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning within and across states. In 2021, the **California** state Legislature authorized the creation of the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data (C2C) within the Government Operations Agency. The legislation authorized the creation of a 21-member governing board and two advisory boards with detailed specific implementation goals for the data system. The C2C system will be a suite of user-friendly resources focused on early learning through K-12 and higher education, as well as on the financial aid and social services that help students reach their goals.[25,26]

The report to the Legislature documents the progress made during 2021-22, the first year of C2C implementation.[27] The report shares how the governance boards are structured, details the boards' five-year plan, outlines the activities in the planning process, provides operation structures and more. This report can help states looking to implement a longitudinal data system articulate the logistics and plan how to jumpstart the process.

Cradle-to-Career System Components

- Data on Education and Job Outcomes
- Tools to Support College Planning and Transition
- Training and Outreach

EXPAND CURRENT DATA SYSTEMS TO CAPTURE OPEN ACCESS METRICS

To fully capture the learning, credits, credentials and work-based learning experiences of learners engaging in expanded access within and across states — and to attend to federal and state accountability requirements — data systems should capture and track all learning experiences. Leaders should analyze outcomes data to identify opportunities to improve CTE programs and fill gaps in the system, especially for historically marginalized learners and learners in rural areas with a lack of access to high-quality CTE and work-based learning opportunities. Having comprehensive, linked data will enable leaders to direct resources to provide equitable access within and across states.

North Dakota has a longitudinal data system that feeds into public and internal data dashboards daily. The system contains secondary, postsecondary and workforce data including CTE participation, concentration and completion rates along with credential attainment.[23] Soon, the state's data system will also include work-based learning completion. The state is currently in the process of creating a map of work-based learning opportunities and experiences and collecting the necessary data.

In addition, North Dakota currently leverages **RU Ready ND**, a career exploration website that contains career exploration videos and portfolios for students to leverage for work-based learning opportunities and employment.[24] Students can also use the website to track their graduation progress and access scholarships. In the future, RU Ready will allow employers to create profiles and upload work-based learning opportunities to connect students to those opportunities. As the work-based learning function of RU Ready continues to evolve, the state will eventually integrate the data into its data system to map the progress of learners completing these opportunities.

For more strategies and actions to address accountability and capturing learners' credits, credentials and experiences in expanded access within and across states, see the _Capture Learners' Credits, Credentials and Experiences_ section in this playbook.

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RESOURCES TO SUPPORT Driving Decisions With Data

- **Auditing a State Career and Technical Education Program for Quality** (Excel*in*Ed)
- **Data Sharing for Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation** (State Data Sharing Initiative)
- **Putting Labor Market Information in the Right Hands: A Guide**
  (Advance CTE, Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Strategy Group)
- **Youth Apprenticeship Data Framework** (Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship)

Visit Advance CTE's Learning that Works Resource Center
to read the complete ***CTE Without Borders*** series.

Endnotes

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