



BUILDING A DIVERSE CTE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE TOOLKIT: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ADVANCE CTE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP

Advance CTE initiated the [Postsecondary State Career Technical Education Leaders Fellowship at Advance CTE – Sponsored by ECMC Foundation](#) (Fellowship) in March 2021 with a goal of supporting and equipping mid-career postsecondary Career Technical Education (CTE) leaders with the knowledge, tools and network to effectively lead high-quality and equitable postsecondary CTE at the state level. The Fellowship aims to strengthen Fellows’ competencies in six areas:

- Lead with an equity lens;
- Have a strategic mindset;
- Be a strong advocate;
- Build relationships/partnerships;
- Commit to high-quality policies and programs; and
- Be data driven.

FELLOWSHIP DESIGN

The Fellowship design was motivated by Advance CTE’s commitment to equity and was informed by several of our leadership initiatives and internal expertise in how to design inclusive and welcoming virtual learning environments. The Fellowship consists of three components:

- Formal learning through seven half-day virtual workshops;
- A coach to provide “just-in-time” individual support during monthly meetings; and
- The Fellows’ completion of a real-world project.



Given Advance CTE's commitment to state CTE leadership, we saw an opportunity to play a role in supporting the expansion and strengthening of a more diverse pool of talented future leaders. In 2020, Advance CTE applied for a grant from the ECMC Foundation to support the creation of a state postsecondary CTE leadership fellowship. In 2021, we received a \$1.25 million grant to support the creation and delivery of a fellowship for two cohorts of diverse aspiring leaders.

It is important to note that the grant Advance CTE received from the ECMC Foundation focused on state postsecondary CTE leadership. However, the lessons we learned along the way are applicable to CTE leadership pipeline initiatives at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Embarking on the task of building a leadership program to address the changing [landscape](#) and current needs across the nation in postsecondary CTE, we turned to longtime partners and existing relationships to assist with designing the Fellowship.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

To ensure that we charted a path that was guided by deep postsecondary and equity-minded leadership principles, knowledge and lived experience, we created a 13-member [National Advisory Committee](#) (NAC) to guide the foundational aspects of the Fellowship. The NAC included representatives from postsecondary institutions, CTE and workforce national organizations, and state and federal education agencies and is racially and geographically diverse.

The NAC met in May 2021 to begin the work of determining the curriculum design and structure of the Fellowship. The grounding framework for the Fellowship, the workshop goals and objectives, the focus of the real-world application projects, and the application and review process were selected and developed in a series of meetings led by Advance CTE in spring and summer 2021. Considering that the nation was still grappling with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the national scope of the work to be completed, and the intent of recruiting Fellows from across the country, a virtual instructional process was chosen as the preferred delivery method.



FELLOWSHIP FRAMEWORK

The grounding framework selected for the Fellowship was the concept posited by Dr. Debra Bragg and Dr. Heather McCambly in a 2018 brief, [Equity-Minded Change Leadership](#). Dr. Bragg introduced Fellows to the tenets of equity-minded change leadership, the combination of the concepts of equity mindedness and the theory of adaptive leadership, during workshop #1 of the Fellowship.

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WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

While Advance CTE has a considerable wealth of knowledge in CTE, we needed to shore up our specialized expertise in postsecondary CTE so we partnered with [Education Strategy Group](#) (ESG), whose staff includes former state postsecondary CTE leaders, to support the design and delivery of the Fellowship.

The Advance CTE staff worked closely with ESG to develop a 15-month long Fellowship, which consisted of [eight workshops](#) to deliver the curriculum standards designed in collaboration with the NAC:

Workshop #1

Fellowship Kickoff and Orientation to the Fellowship Methodology;

Workshop #2

The Inequitable Legacy of Postsecondary Career Technical Education: Implications and Opportunities for the Future;

Workshop #3

Racial Equity-Minded Leadership;

Workshop #4

Expanding Data and Accountability Models to Promote Equity, Collaboration and Innovation;

Workshop #5

Advancing Learner-Centered Career Navigation and Support Structures for Marginalized Learners;

Workshop #6

Building Inclusive, Equitable and Responsive Pathways That Help Learners Actualize Their Aspirations;

Workshop #7

Promoting Meaningful Public-Private Partnerships That Provide Value for Learners; and

Workshop #8

Fellowship Reflection, Real-World Project Presentation and Closeout.

The Fellowship workshops also included the following activities and materials (shared in an [annotated bibliography](#)):

- Pre- and post-workshop reading materials on current postsecondary CTE best practices and equity-minded leadership principles;
- Presentations by state leaders and national postsecondary CTE organizations;
- Application activities to solidify learning in a collaborative virtual setting; and
- Networking activities to build a sense of community among cohort members and allow Fellows to learn from their collective lived experiences.



REAL-WORLD PROJECTS

A key component of the Fellowship was the opportunity for Fellows to actively apply the skills and competencies developed from a combination of their participation in the workshops and their background experience gained from being a CTE educator or administrator. During the Fellowship application process, Fellows were required to identify a CTE challenge related to equity in their state, region or institution they would like to address. Upon selection to the Fellowship, Fellows were required to complete a real-world project that aligned with their state postsecondary CTE career progression goals. Completion of the project allowed Fellows to advance their understanding and skills, apply the knowledge gained through the Fellowship, and make a meaningful impact in their community. The project's scope had to be directly relevant to postsecondary CTE; be accomplishable in the time frame of the Fellowship; and reflect a desire to demonstrate leadership in the school, college, district, community, state or system they worked or served in or to examine national trends.

Steps to complete the real-world projects included:

- Initial identification during the application process;
- Proposals submitted in March 2022 and approved by Advance CTE;
- Final project review conducted with coaches and Advance CTE in November and December 2023; and
- Project presentations in January 2023.

RECRUITMENT

Advance CTE developed a comprehensive Fellows recruitment plan, guided by input from the NAC and engaging our extensive network of educators, institutions and agencies. The recruitment plan was a central component of ensuring a robust and diverse pool of candidates. We conducted intentional and individualized outreach to organizations that represent target audiences, particularly aspiring leaders of color. The outreach included messages that were responsive to the concern and interests of target audiences. We also defined candidate audiences broadly to encourage diversity of experience and perspective in Fellowship candidates. Equity was a priority in this outreach to ensure that dissemination channels reached the individuals most in need of the resources provided through this Fellowship. The recruitment process resulted in 53 candidates from 22 states.

SELECTING THE FELLOWS

Five groups of three NAC members plus a member of the Advance CTE staff reviewed every application using a common scoring rubric. On October 4, 2021, the NAC used a facilitation process to select the members of the inaugural cohort of the Fellowship based on the scoring rubric, ability for the participant to benefit from the Fellowship and diversity (of location, demographics, etc.). The 15 Fellows selected were geographically dispersed across 13 states and racially diverse with five Black women, six Black men, one Asian man, and two White women. Other social identities reported by the Fellows included two members of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer plus (LGBTQ+) community and one first-generation immigrant. The structured recruitment plan and outreach efforts resulted in a quality candidate pool of diverse applicants, and effectively managing the selection process subsequently resulted in an inaugural cohort of emerging postsecondary state

CTE leaders representative of under-served populations. Upon selection, Fellows received a phone call from Advance CTE staff welcoming them to the Fellowship in October 2021 and providing them with next steps and the importance of the enrollment process.

Fellows were required to complete a memorandum of understanding, which outlined:

- Expectations;
- Fellowship activities; and
- Receipt of the \$1,800 stipend for Fellowship participation.

The completed enrollment form collected:

- Information on the Fellow's experiences, values and professional and leadership goals; and
- Coach preferences.

Note: *Fellows were informed that their responses would be shared with coaches and used in the matching process.*



COACHES

While the Advance CTE staff remained connected to and responsive to the needs of the Fellows — even providing Fellows with the personal phone number of the staff Fellowship lead — coaches played a significant role in the success of the Fellowship. Drawing upon the network of the NAC, Advance CTE staff, ESG staff, and an executive director with 30 years of experience in building relationships in the CTE field, postsecondary CTE leaders were recruited to serve as coaches for the Fellowship. Invitation emails were sent to targeted individuals based on the interests and preferences Fellows identified in the enrollment process (e.g., demographics and content expertise). The email included the Fellows' bio to increase the potential of a successful matching process. By

November 2021 coaches were recruited, onboarded and introduced to their Fellow to begin monthly meetings in December 2021.

Coaches held monthly meetings with their assigned Fellow to:

- Expand the Fellow's network and provide them with access to opportunities such as the [CTE Research Network](#) programs, doctoral program recommendations and conference presentations;
- Provide feedback on real-world project proposals and final project edit recommendations; and
- Discuss and review career opportunities in postsecondary CTE.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

In an 18-month time span from August 2021 to January 2023, Advance CTE:

- Recruited a racially diverse group of aspiring postsecondary state leaders from across the country to ensure geographic diversity;
- Developed an application process with a review and selection method that emphasized a commitment to equity, high-quality programming standards and data-driven CTE program evaluations;
- Assigned each Fellow to a coach based on professional goals and preferences identified during the Fellowship enrollment process;
- Met with Fellows at the [ECMCF CTE Leadership Collaborative Convening](#) to network across five Fellowships: CTE postsecondary leadership, journalism, industry partners, data and research;
- Conducted eight virtual workshops with ESG, our curriculum design partners;
- Met separately with coaches and NAC members to ensure that they remained connected to the Fellowship and aware of workshop topics, provided real-time feedback on processes and practices and adjusted norms;
- Reviewed and approved real-world project proposals and ensured that Fellows met individually with Advance CTE staff and coaches to complete their approved real-world projects;
- Hosted Fellows at the 2022 Fall Meeting, where they were provided with an opportunity to network with state CTE leaders and facilitate breakout sessions that connected timely topics related to advocacy of CTE, equipping attendees with strategies to elevate their voice and the voices of learners and partners to advance high-quality, equitable policies; and
- Promoted the Fellows nationally throughout the Fellowship in announcements during the Fellowship launch with bios, "Get to Know You" blogs and individual highlights, real-world project briefs and video productions.





CLOSEOUT OF THE INAUGURAL COHORT

The knowledge and skills gained by the [inaugural cohort of the Fellowship](#) were on display during the January 2023 real-world project presentations, which were scored by reviewers recruited by Advance CTE. The expert reviewers were individuals from varying sectors of postsecondary CTE who were selected based on how well their backgrounds associated with the Fellows' real-world project topics. The reviewers ranged from the assistant commissioner of workforce development to a senior policy analyst at the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The [Fellows' real-world projects](#), scaled for application during the time frame of the Fellowship, addressed equity challenges within their institutions, school districts, region or state.



The closing session held on January 25, 2023, was a celebration of the relationships developed among the inaugural cohort members and their commitment to remaining connected to serve as a resource to each other. The celebration/closing session opened with a personalized message to Fellows by U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona ([video link](#)).

Note: *Due to competing work priorities and employment turnover, 12 Fellows completed the inaugural cohort of the Fellowship.*

GETTING READY FOR COHORT 2: ADJUSTING THE FELLOWSHIP DESIGN

The staff at Advance CTE, in consultation with ESG, adjusted the Fellowship's curriculum to better meet the defined and evaluated needs of Fellows prior to the launch of cohort 2. The inaugural cohort of Fellows' increasing agency and comfort with the application of the cumulative knowledge gained from Fellowship activities became evident throughout year two, and the lessons learned were applied to improve delivery methods and engagement strategies for cohort 1 and the planning for cohort 2. The following are a few of the adjustments and recommendations based on a few of the lessons learned through the administration of the Fellowship.

FELLOWS LESSONS LEARNED

- The application criteria for cohort 2 were adjusted to align with the Fellows who were successful in cohort 1.
- One-on-one check-ins were scheduled to increase connectivity to the Fellowship and just-in-time supports.
- Stipends were prorated based on participation and completion of activities.

Being able to create equitable spaces also depends on who leads the space, which includes Advance CTE staff being mindful of the participants' backgrounds, knowledge base and demographics.



COACHES LESSONS LEARNED

- The number of group meetings for coaches were reduced, transitioning away from quarterly meetings to one-on-one 15-minute bi-monthly meetings with the Fellowship lead. This change increased the connection to the Fellowship.
- Coaches were recruited from cohort 1 for cohort 2.
- Coaches were introduced to all Fellows at the kick-off meeting and given a directory with all Fellows' contact information, and Fellows were provided with a directory of all coaches.
- The Advance CTE staff scheduled calendar reminders for monthly coaching report submissions.
- Fellows were required to ideate and share specific questions from each workshop with coaches.
- Coaches were provided with a summary of the workshop presentations and the Jamboard with Fellows' workshop reflections.

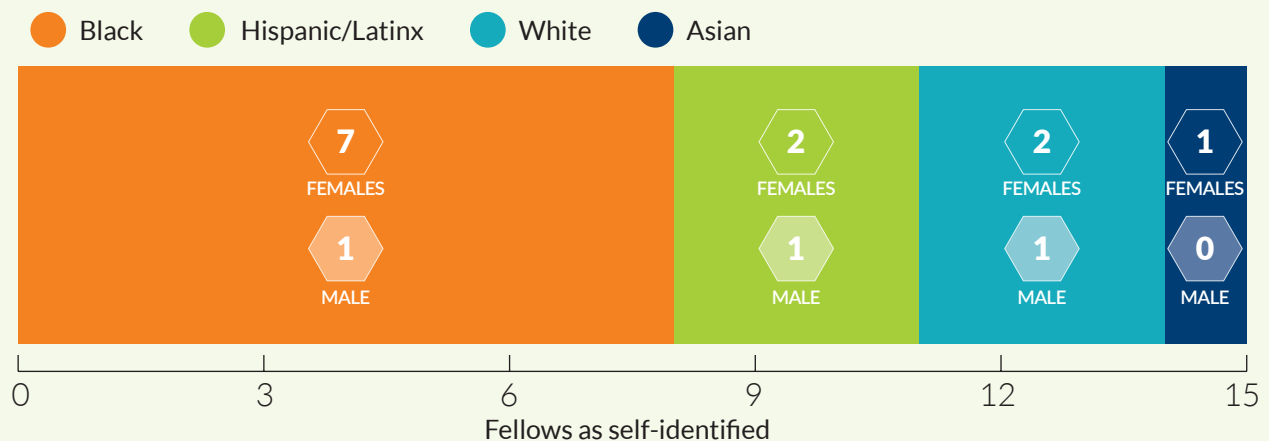
- A mid-project check-in meeting was added to include a review of the final rubric for the real-world project, and Fellows completed a two-minute elevator pitch for their project to receive feedback from unassigned coaches.
- Coaches have become personal career mentors, and the structure of the check-in reports for the monthly meetings was changed to foster this relationship with the Fellows.

The Fellowship increased the number of Latinx and White participants in cohort 2.

Currently cohort 2 Fellows have completed Workshops #1 through #7, attended the ECMCF CTE Leadership Collaborative Convening, submitted their real-world project proposals for approval by Advance CTE, and met with their assigned coaches monthly. They are scheduled to attend the 2023 Advance CTE Fall Meeting and complete their real-world project presentations by November 2023. The Fellowship Alumni Network was launched on September 1, 2023, and will include members of cohort 2 upon their completion of the Fellowship in December 2023.

2022 COHORT 2 FELLOWSHIP

Representing 13 States



Acknowledgments

To find out more about the essential elements of the Fellowship that led to the successful recruitment and selection of a diverse group of aspiring state postsecondary CTE leaders; the intentional design of Fellowship spaces that reinforced collaboration, cultivation of relationships and the expansion of networks to increase social capital; and our processes to increase the skills and competencies of Fellows to lead a high-quality CTE program with an equity-minded lens, see the Building a Diverse CTE Leadership Pipeline Toolkit Guide. The guide also includes resources, recommendations and guiding questions to replicate the Fellowship's design.

The success of the Advance CTE – ECMCF Fellows and the Fellowship in general is attributable to the host of visionary leaders and diligent contributors who provided resources, time and expertise to this endeavor: our generous sponsor [ECMC Foundation](#); former Advance CTE Executive Director Kimberly Green; the NAC; Dr. Debra Bragg; [Education Strategy Group](#); Fellowship consultant, advisory committee member, and coach recruiter Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden; the 30 coaches from across the nation in various leadership positions in state postsecondary CTE agencies and postsecondary institutions; guest speakers from national organizations and CTE and workforce agencies; real-world project reviewers; and the Advance CTE staff: Dr. Kevin R Johnson Sr. (Senior Advisor and Fellowship Lead), Amy Hodge (Policy Associate and Fellowship Coordinator), Stacy Whitehouse (Associate Director, Communications), and Jodi Langellotti (Communications Associate).



USING THE TOOLKIT

The Building a Diverse CTE Leadership Pipeline Toolkit consists of a suite of tools and resources:

- Part 1: [An Introduction to the Building a Diverse CTE Leadership Pipeline Toolkit](#)** offers an overview of the goals and purpose of building a CTE leadership pipeline, as well as a full list of the components of the toolkit.
- Part 2: [An Overview of the Advance CTE Leaders Fellowship](#)** enables CTE leaders to learn from Advance CTE's experiences associated with administering and facilitating the Postsecondary State Career Technical Education Leaders Fellowship at Advance CTE — Sponsored by ECMC Foundation.
- Part 3: [Building a Diverse CTE Leadership Pipeline Toolkit Guide](#)** is a comprehensive document with guiding questions, recommendations and additional resources to assist CTE leaders with replicating the Advance CTE processes to develop a leadership pipeline program.
- Part 4: [Building a Diverse CTE Leadership Pipeline Workbook](#)** is a plug-and-play resource aligned with the guiding questions and recommendations from the guide to allow CTE leaders to actively design their CTE leadership program as they work through the guide. The workbook includes additional tools to facilitate program development