Effectively Communicating Career Technical Education to Engage Every Learner: A Recruitment & Engagement Tool

Video Series

Section 2:
Building Meaningful Relationships

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Welcome to Section 2 of the Effectively Communicating Career Technical Education to Engage Every Learner: A Recruitment and Engagement Tool where we provide information on the power of relationships, messaging, and effective communication practices to enhance recruitment systems and structures to ensure all learners have access to and can succeed in high-quality Career Technical Education (CTE) programs.

In Section 1 of this series, we emphasized the connection of the actions within this tool to meeting the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (or Perkins V), which requires regular engagement of stakeholders and partners representing learners with special population status. In doing so, we  ensure that all learners can have access to and succeed in high-quality CTE programs, especially learners who are currently underrepresented in these programs.

In Section 2, we focus on building meaningful relationships with various audiences within a population, an integral part of better understanding their needs to effectively close gaps in participation and enrollment for special populations in CTE.

This video will provide knowledge and strategies that will be helpful as you complete Section 2 of the accompanying workbook.

**Building Meaningful Relationships**

# Why is it important to build meaningful relationships to improve recruitment efforts?

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Why is it important to build meaningful relationships to improve recruitment efforts?

We often assume that our <u>messaging</u>, communications, marketing materials and other recruitment materials are not reaching certain communities or populations, and while that may be true due to the format of the materials and how we are delivering them, what if the larger problem is that our materials do <u>not</u> resonate with certain communities and populations.

What if there is a <u>misalignment</u>, perceived or actual, in values and vision between our efforts and that of the population we are aiming to reach?

A misalignment or <u>incongruency</u> between values and vision can break down trust and trust is the foundation upon which we build meaningful relationships.

So, to build meaningful relationships and identify what the population we are trying to reach values, we must build trust.

Building Trust to Build Meaningful Relationships

Engage: solicit feedback, opinions and ideas from the population

Listen: seek first to understand before being understood

Connect with what is happening in their population

Communicate often and in ways that resonate with the population

Requires *intentional, sustained* effort, *over time* from district, institution, and state level personnel.

Some populations will require more time to build trust

Actions to build trust = Actions to strengthen and maintain meaningful relationships

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- Building trust involves <u>engaging</u> the population to solicit feedback, opinions and ideas to better align the values and vision. Once we engage the population, we must listen to them with a desire to truly understand what they value and what they need. We must hear it from them directly and not assume we know or understand. We must <u>listen</u> to understand the needs and values of the population before seeking to see if they understand the benefits of CTE.
- We must <u>connect</u> with the population to show that we care about them and support them – we will dig into what this can look like in a few moments
- We must <u>communicate</u> often and in ways that resonate with the population: language, terminology, images, messages that reflect their values and via channels that they trust and use.
- These trust building actions <u>require</u> intentional, sustained effort over time and can happen with learners and the adults within a population and will take the efforts of district, institution and state level personnel. We must keep in mind that some populations have historical trauma, barriers and exclusions that will require <u>more</u> actions and time to build trust.
- The time and effort put into building trust will pay off dividends as these actions are also the actions required to <u>strengthen</u> and maintain meaningful relationships.
- Before we  dig into these actions a little deeper, let's go over some key terms that we will use throughout this work.

Terminology

- **Population:** race, ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic status, etc.
- **Focus population:** the focus of the engagement and recruitment efforts - may also be identified as a special population in Perkins.
- **Audience:** who we are trying to reach.
- **Multitiered audience:** including but not limited to learners, families, educators, population members, population leaders, etc.
- **Focus audience:** A specific subgroup of a focus population, one tier of the tiered audience (in this case, learners).

GLOSSARY

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I have already referred to population or a group of people, identified by shared characteristics. These characteristics may be based on race, ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic status, or any other demographic.

When you are looking at your CTE enrollment and participation data and through the Relationship-Building Action Assessment tool in Section 2 of the workbook, you will identify a single population currently underrepresented in your CTE programs to be the focus of this work.

This group will be referred to as the focus population or a group of people, identified by shared characteristics, who are the focus of the engagement and recruitment efforts. The focus population may also be identified as a special population in Perkins.

When we talk about messaging and communications, it is important to identify the audience or the group who receives and interprets messaging. In other words, who we are trying to reach.

There are multiple audiences that exist within any given population and this is called the multitiered audience. The tiers include learners, families, educators, population members, population leaders, and more.

In order to tailor messaging and communications to the needs of not only a population but also a specific audience, we will narrow the approach down to a focus audience. A focus audience is a specific subgroup of a focus population, one tier of the tiered audience, identified by shared characteristics (like learners), who receive and interpret messaging and communications.

You can find these terms and more in the <u>glossary</u> at the back of the workbook. Let's dig into the four trust building activities mentioned earlier, starting with engaging with the population.

Engage the Population to
Build Meaningful Relationships

**Engage**
- Focus groups
- Advisory groups
- Surveys
- Committees
- Listening sessions

"Stakeholder" engagement is required within the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) during the development of the state plan and state performance levels.

**Population Leaders & Members**
**Learners & Families**
**Faculty & Staff**

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Engagement actions can include focus groups, advisory groups, surveys, committees and listening sessions. While required at specific times by the Perkins V, engagement with the population should be an ongoing and continuous process in order to build trust and enhance recruitment and retention efforts.

Engagement actions should span the population, from leaders and members (which can include employers) to learners & families to faculty and staff that work most with the population you are trying to engage.

## Listen to the Population to Build Meaningful Relationships

**Solicit and** listen to input on
- What they value
- What they want and need for their future
- Translation needs and nuances
- Communication & recruitment channels
- Their perceptions of CTE
- Communication & recruitment materials

**Population Leaders & Members**
**Learners & Families**
**Faculty & Staff**

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During engagement, it is important to <u>solicit</u> and listen to input on <u>what</u> the population values, <u>what</u> they want and need for their future and the future of the youth in their community, <u>translation</u> needs and nuances, <u>how</u> they prefer to get their communications (which channels) and in which formats (video, poster, brochure, etc.), their <u>perceptions</u> of CTE as well as on any <u>current</u> communication and recruitment materials

Like engagement actions, listening actions should happen continuously and span the population, from <u>leaders</u> and members to <u>learners</u> & families to <u>faculty</u> and staff that work most with the population you are trying to engage.

Connecting to the population is important to show that you respect their culture and values. Connecting can look like:

- Participating in or acknowledging their community events. This might involve CTE leaders attending a community event or ensuring that state or local CTE events do not fall on the same day as community events or holidays.
- Being present within the population by participating in community lead meetings and forming relationships with their leadership
- Co-hosting events with the population – partnering with them to connect CTE to events that regularly happen within their community
- Bringing recruitment events, info sessions and other efforts into their community to increase access and attendance
- Involving leaders and learners in the decision-making process to ensure the decisions match the values and needs of the population

Building meaningful relationships requires regular and consistent communication. To increase the impact and reach of the communications:

- Use language and terminology that the population can connect with – this may mean translating communications or using alternate language that is more attainable by members of the population
- Communicate in ways the population prefers – maybe they prefer to watch videos or read something in a population newsletter for example.
- In addition, communicate via messengers and channels that the population trusts and values – these might be people like school counselors or faith leaders, or places like at events or at church, or things like specific radio stations or news outlets.
- Ensure that communication is a two-way street by establishing regular lanes for feedback, questions and comments for all communications
- Authentically represent the population in visual communications
- Be transparent in communications especially when addressing challenges you or the population are facing, Transparency builds trust.
- Regular and consistent communication must include all collaborators – leaders and members, learners and families and faculty and staff working with the population.

## How do you know which population to focus on?

### Dig into your data
- Compare program enrollment and participation data to identify up to four groups or populations currently underrepresented in your CTE programs

### Support for accessing your program and enrollment data
- Perkins Collaborative Resource Network (PCRN) data explorer
- CTE in Your State

**Fast Facts**

**34,517**
Associates Degrees &
Certificates Awarded

**CTE Secondary Concentrators**

**37.5%**
of All Degrees & Certificates
Awarded Statewide

**CTE Postsecondary Concentrators**

Perkins V Enrollment Data

| Program Year | State/Territory | Enrollment Type | Education Level | Student Subgroups | Career Clusters |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022-2023 | Colorado | All Enrollment Types | All Education Levels | All Student Subgroups | |

Selected Filters

Clear Selections | Generate Report

Perkins V Enrollment Data Report

| Program Year | State/Territory | Enrollment Type | Education Level | Grand Total (Total Students) | Male (Total Students) | Female (Total Students) | American Indian or Alaskan Native (Total Students) | Asian (Total Students) | Black or African American (Total Students) | Hispanic/Latino (Total Students) | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Total Students) | White (Total Students) | Two or More Races (Total Students) | Unknown (Total Students) | Individuals With Disabilities (ADA) (Total Students) | Individuals With Disabilities (IDEA/504) (Total Students) | Individuals from Economically Disadvantaged Families (Total Students) | In |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022-2023 | Colorado | CTE Concentrator | Postsecondary | 34,550 | 18,374 | 16,176 | 271 | 964 | 1,259 | 9,976 | 77 | 18,650 | 950 | 2,403 | 139 | | 3,361 | |
| 2022-2023 | Colorado | CTE Participant | Postsecondary | 82,240 | 43,835 | 38,405 | 668 | 2,853 | 3,910 | 23,343 | 207 | 43,426 | 3,032 | 4,901 | 261 | | 7,822 | |
| 2022-2023 | Colorado | CTE Concentrator | Secondary | 30,875 | 17,174 | 13,701 | 155 | 1,014 | 952 | 9,200 | 64 | 18,206 | 1,224 | | | 4,600 | 9,141 | |
| 2022-2023 | Colorado | CTE Participant | Secondary | 105,803 | 57,152 | 48,651 | 639 | 3,429 | 4,109 | 34,053 | 282 | 58,306 | 4,785 | | | 16,156 | 33,123 | |

It is unlikely that you have the resources to focus on every population all at once, so how do you prioritize the population you want to focus on building meaningful relationships with to improve recruitment and retention? You dig into your data.

Gather CTE program enrollment and participation data, available through your state data dashboard or consolidated annual report (CAR) data, and identify up to four groups or populations that are currently underrepresented in your CTE programs. If you need additional support in accessing your data, the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network or PCRN data explorer is a great resource for enrollment, concentrator, and performance data that are disaggregated by special population and searchable by state. As an additional resource, Advance CTE has basic enrollment data available via CTE in Your State. Both of these resources are linked in Section 2 of the workbook and in the description of this video.

PCRN Data Explorer: https://cte.ed.gov/pcrn/explorer
CTE in Your State:
https://careertech.org/our-vision/cte-in-your-state/?utm_source=communicating_cte_video_2&utm_medium=video_transcript&utm_campaign=cte_in_your_state

The Building Meaningful Relationships Actions Assessment Tool will help you create a heat map to identify at least one population you would most like to focus on building or strengthening a relationship within subsequent sections. Using the four populations you have identified as being underrepresented in your CTE program data, select the dropdown category that best describes the current status of the relationship-building action with that population. By the end of the assessment you will have enough information to determine who your focus population will be which you will notate in the corresponding area at the end of Section 2.

Next Steps

**Work with your team and/or colleagues to:**

- Dig into your program enrollment and participation data
- Complete the Building Meaningful Relationships Actions Assessment Tool

**Section 3: Changing the Narrative with Asset-Based Framing**

- Defining people by their aspirations and contributions before noting their challenges. This framing can help to reduce bias and promote a focus on systemic barriers as the problem.

SECTION
**2**
BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Assess relationships and conduct relationship-building activities

**1 month**

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To take the <u>next</u> steps in building meaningful relationships, first <u>dig</u> into your program enrollment and participation data. Next <u>complete</u> the Building Meaningful Relationships Actions Assessment Tool to create a heatmap of relationship building activities that will help you narrow your focus down to one population of learners currently underrepresented in your CTE programs. The anticipated <u>minimum</u> time required to complete Section 2 is approximately 1 month though it may take you more or less time.

In <u>Section 3</u> of this series, we'll discuss using an asset-based framing approach, naming the aspirations and contributions of a group before naming any challenges they may be facing, which primes collaborators for addressing systemic obstacles as opposed to thinking that the group or focus population is what needs intervention.

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To view CTE messaging research conducted by Advance CTE and sponsored by Siemens Foundation, please visit https://careertech.org/what-we-do/case-making- communications/engage-families-learners/ or scan the code.

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This concludes the Section 2 video of the Effectively Communicating Career Technical Education to Engage Every Learner: A Recruitment and Engagement Tool. Thanks for watching! You are one step closer to effectively communicate CTE so every learner can access, feel welcome, and succeed in CTE.

For more information on the CTE messaging research conducted by Advance CTE with learners and families and supported by the Siemens Foundation, please visit careertech.org/what-we-do/case-making-communications/engage-families-learners or scan the code.