




**EQUIP.** ●  
|||  
**EMPOWER.** ●  
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**ELEVATE.** ●  
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2021 Annual Report





**EQUIP. EMPOWER. ELEVATE.** Advance CTE's 2021–24 strategic plan — which strives to ensure equitable career success for every learner — uses these organizing themes to guide our work. The strategic plan lays out an ambitious roadmap to equip Advance CTE to lead with a focus on quality and equity, to empower our members to realize the *CTE Without Limits* vision, and to elevate high-quality and equitable CTE. I am proud to share this annual report with you, which highlights the remarkable progress we — Advance CTE and our members in all 50 states and the District of Columbia — made toward these goals last year.

Together, we coalesced around a shared, bold vision for the future of CTE. Together, we pivoted, adapted, and supported one another — as leaders and colleagues — during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Together, we secured increased federal funding for CTE. Together, we bravely took on the challenges of racial and systemic inequity in CTE. Together, we created resources and tools that lift up successful practices and models and built new solutions when none existed. Together, we are showing the power of CTE to meet the present and future needs of our country's learners, workforce and economy.

As you reflect on our accomplishments in 2021, I hope you will share my sense of pride. There is much to celebrate ... and there is more work to be done. However, I am confident that together, through persistence, resilience, bravery, boldness and leadership, we will achieve CTE without limits.

With gratitude,

Kimberly Green

# EQUIP

Advance CTE to lead with a focus on quality and equity.

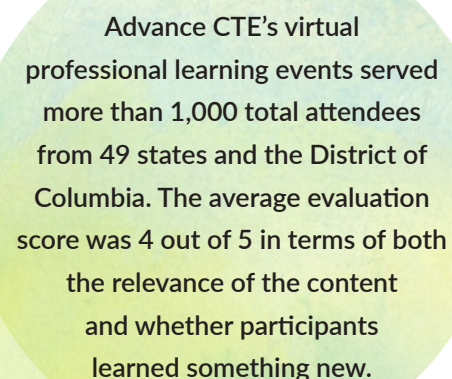
Advance CTE's members are best positioned to advance high-quality and equitable Career Technical Education (CTE) when they can learn and share with each other. We are privileged to provide countless formal and informal spaces for members to showcase and seek to identify strategies for improving their policies and programs.

## Equipping Our Members Through Community Building

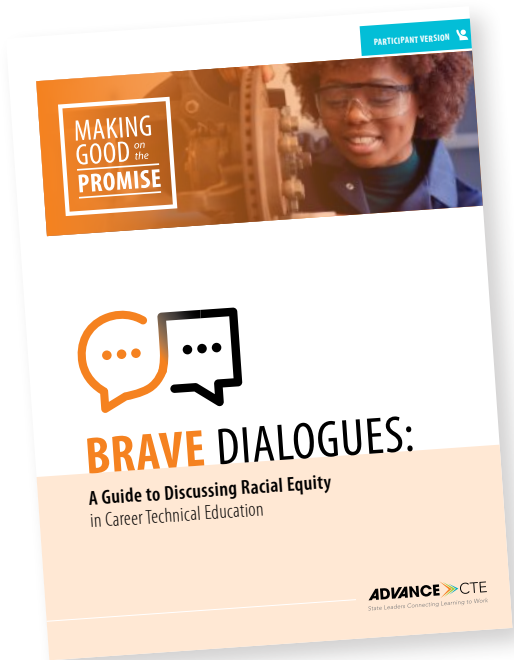
Advance CTE and our members persevered through the ongoing challenges presented by the coronavirus to connect at virtual professional learning events. Through 14 events hosted by Advance CTE during 2021, including two multi-day conferences as well as workshops, trainings and topic-based workgroups, members grew and strengthened their leadership skills, learned and shared lessons for how to view their work through an equity lens, and gained cutting-edge content knowledge. Members swapped links to their favorite resources and shared laughs, good news and common struggles in these video chats and virtual workshops.

## Equipping Our Members With the Resources They Need

Advance CTE released 53 resources in 2021, and the *Learning that Works Resource Center* enjoyed 150,000 pageviews throughout the year. The topics of these resources aligned with member priorities, including data quality, work-based learning, communicating about CTE, employer engagement and more, and featured replicable examples from leading states. Members participated in four Ask an Expert sessions, during which Advance CTE staff shared practical examples to bring these resources to life.



Advance CTE's virtual professional learning events served more than 1,000 total attendees from 49 states and the District of Columbia. The average evaluation score was 4 out of 5 in terms of both the relevance of the content and whether participants learned something new.



To support states in their commitment to racial equity in CTE, Advance CTE developed the *Brave Dialogues* discussion and facilitation guide. The guide, developed with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, includes activities and discussion prompts that state and local leaders can use to facilitate conversations around racial equity in CTE. In the fall, Advance CTE piloted the tool, with plans to take this training to the broader membership in the coming year.

### Equipping New State CTE Directors to Lead

Nine states welcomed new State CTE Directors in 2021, with many of them taking advantage of Advance CTE's virtual leadership program, the New State Director Institute (NSDI). This program pairs new State Directors with longer-standing State Director mentors and offers deep-dive workshops on key topics including strengths-based leadership, program quality, and equity and access in CTE. After completing NSDI, which is designed to support new leaders in this exciting and complex role, the NSDI cohort members reported a 32 percent increase on average in their understanding of how to affect change in their states. They also reported a 23 percent increase on average in feeling connected to other CTE leaders at the end of the program.

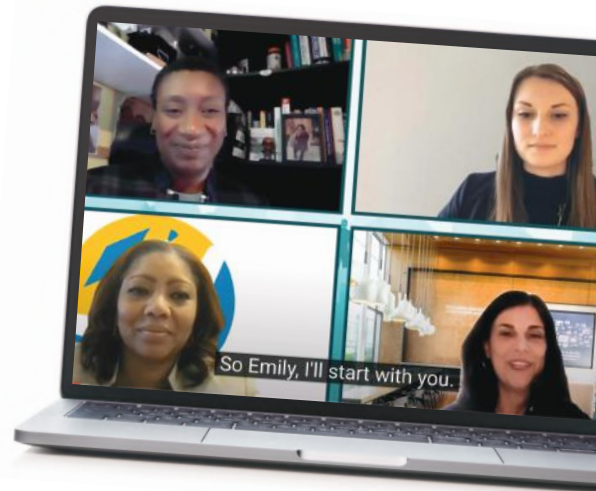
“In other spaces, it was nice to have faces I recognized from NSDI and know that I was not the only new person.”

— *New State Director Institute Participant*



## Equipping the Field With Virtual Annual Meetings

In 2021, Advance CTE hosted our two annual meetings virtually, engaging a combined 600-plus CTE leaders from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands over two days in the spring and two days in the fall. The meetings offered the CTE community a chance to reconnect, reset, reimagine, and challenge the limits of CTE by sharing and discussing promising practices in break-out sessions; hear from philanthropic, non-profit and government leaders; and join role-alike networking sessions — vital avenues for interaction in another year during which in-person meetings were few and far between. For the first time, Advance CTE opened a networking space for CTE Leaders of Color as part of our commitment to advancing equity and supporting all members.




“I enjoyed the break-out rooms designed to allow for interaction among participants. It is so valuable to learn from colleagues across the nation.”

— Fall Meeting Participant

## Equipping Our Board and Our Team With Internal Equity Training

Advance CTE continued to pursue our commitment to understanding how to identify racially inequitable policies and practices, working with an external consultant to engage all staff in six trainings and discussions to further understand how to apply a racial equity lens to our work, internally and externally. The Advance CTE Board of Directors participated in an introductory racial equity training to ensure that organizational leadership fully understands the intent and importance of the equity commitment, with subsequent trainings scheduled for 2022.



100 percent of State Directors agree or strongly agree they are a valued member of Advance CTE, 100 percent of State Directors agree or strongly agree they are satisfied with the value of their membership and 97 percent of State Directors agree or strongly agree Advance CTE is their first stop when they need a resource on a CTE topic.

# EMPOWER

our members to realize the **CTE Without Limits** vision.

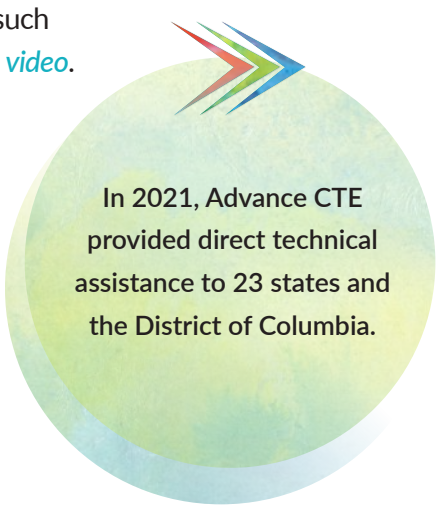
Advance CTE designs all of our resources, tools and regular skill-building opportunities to help members adopt and implement the policies and practices necessary to turn the CTE Without Limits vision into a reality.

## Empowering Members Through CTE Without Limits

In March 2021, Advance CTE and our partners released *CTE Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education*, which was developed with input from nearly 200 national, state and local education and workforce development leaders and is supported by 42 national organizations representing state and local leaders across K-12, postsecondary, adult education, workforce development and industry. Accomplishing this ambitious vision for a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem requires leadership and support from leaders at all levels, and Advance CTE's partners in this vision are critical to ensuring that such leaders are equipped to realize this vision.

Advance CTE welcomed more than 400 vision supporters from all corners of the CTE field to a *virtual release celebration* to share insights on the potential of the vision to empower leaders and learners. Advance CTE also produced practical tools such as sector-focused fact sheets, a ready-to-use *presentation* and a *promotional video*.

A key part of the early vision phase was building broad awareness of the five principles and their action steps. Advance CTE held five virtual Lunch & Learn sessions, one on each of *CTE Without Limits* vision principles. The sessions, attended by nearly 400 individuals, featured vision partners and supporters discussing the work underway – and the work still ahead – to implement the vision. Advance CTE measured the impact of these Lunch & Learns by asking attendees



In 2021, Advance CTE provided direct technical assistance to 23 states and the District of Columbia.

at the start and end of each session to evaluate how much they knew about the principle and how ready they felt to advance the principle in their work, with attendees reporting an average increase of 25 percent in knowledge and readiness across the five sessions.

### **Empowering Members to Accomplish CTE Without Limits**

Successful implementation of the vision requires close collaboration across the CTE community. To understand the current work states are doing aligned with the vision and the perceived challenges to fully realizing it, Advance CTE convened a Vision Kitchen Cabinet. Thirteen State Directors representing all five Advance CTE regions and secondary and post-secondary systems joined six working sessions, sharing valuable input and insight to help inform and prioritize the next phase of implementation supports Advance CTE is providing.

Advance CTE published [Pushing the Limits: A Roadmap for Advancing CTE Without Limits](#) to provide states a step-by-step guide for implementing the vision principles. States are not in this work alone: Advance CTE awarded Colorado, Nebraska and South Carolina technical assistance grants to empower cross-sector teams to create action plans to tackle such challenges as creating a state CTE equity plan, supporting learners with disabilities, and identifying strengths and gaps in the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment process.

### **Empowering the Next Generation of State CTE Leaders**

The Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellowship at Advance CTE — Sponsored by ECMC Foundation strives to address the growing shortage of state postsecondary CTE leadership by closing racial representation gaps and removing equity barriers to leadership advancement. Through individualized supports, building intentional networks and a real-world fellowship project, the inaugural 15-person cohort of Advance CTE — ECMCF Fellows is gaining the skills and network to pursue leadership positions and advance high-quality, equitable state postsecondary CTE systems. Eighty-seven percent of the selected Fellows identify as a member of a historically minoritized racial or ethnic group. Fellows bring a wide range of experience and perspectives to workshop discussions and serve in many CTE leadership roles, from CTE educators to deans to individuals working in state CTE offices. The program is guided by a national advisory committee that provides critical insights into program recruitment, curriculum, coaches and more.

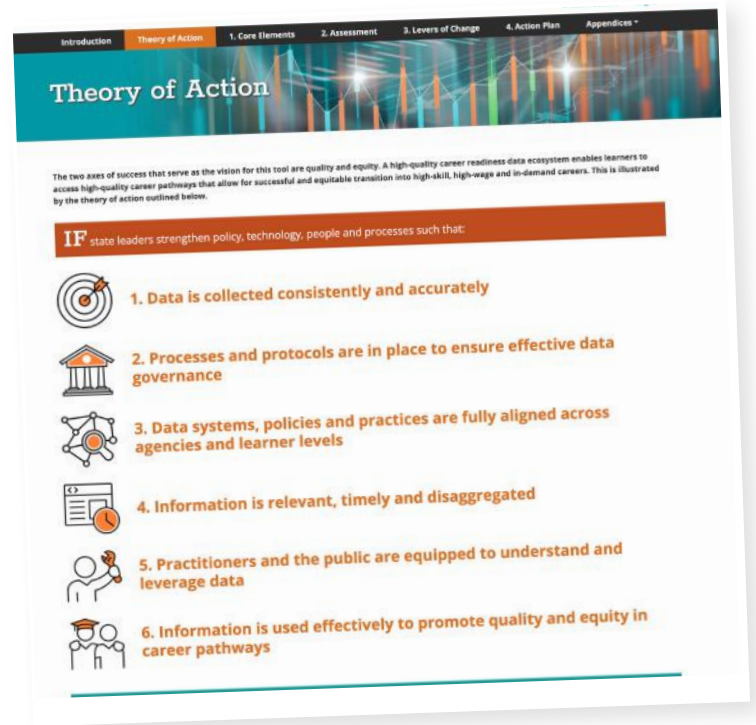
“I applied to the Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellowship at Advance CTE — Sponsored by ECMC Foundation because I wanted to gain the necessary tools to amplify my voice as a CTE leader of color.”

— Janelle Washington



## Empowering CTE Leaders to Make Data-Driven Decisions

The Advancing Postsecondary CTE Data Quality Initiative (PDI), funded by the ECMC Foundation, completed its second year in 2021. In February 2021, Advance CTE launched the Career Readiness Data Quality Policy Benchmark tool microsite at <https://dataquality.careertech.org/>. The tool was developed with input and guidance from an expert workgroup of state, local and national leaders. The microsite is a one-stop hub and includes a comprehensive state or system-level needs assessment, a summary of the workgroup's six principles for a high-quality data ecosystem, an action planning tool, six case studies and a resource repository.




The five grantees selected to participate in the PDI – Alabama, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida and Oregon – continued to make progress toward their goals through participation in the community of practice, convening regularly to share common obstacles and identify solutions to improve the quality and use of postsecondary CTE data. Ninety-four percent of respondents said that the technical assistance their state has received from Advance CTE is either effective or very effective.

Advance CTE's commitment to understanding and using data to improve outcomes for CTE learners is readily apparent in our CTE Opportunity Gap Analysis

Workshop, supported by the Joyce Foundation. The full-day virtual train-

the-trainer event was delivered to state leaders from 10 states, and participants worked together and learned from one another

through a process to identify gaps in their CTE data, examine root causes, select evidence-based intervention strategies and develop a comprehensive equity action plan.



100 percent of participants in Advance CTE's Opportunity Gap Analysis Workshop said they were likely to use the information learned in the session in their own work, and 80 percent said they felt prepared to lead the CTE opportunity gap analysis process in their own state after the one-day session.



## Empowering Members With Solutions

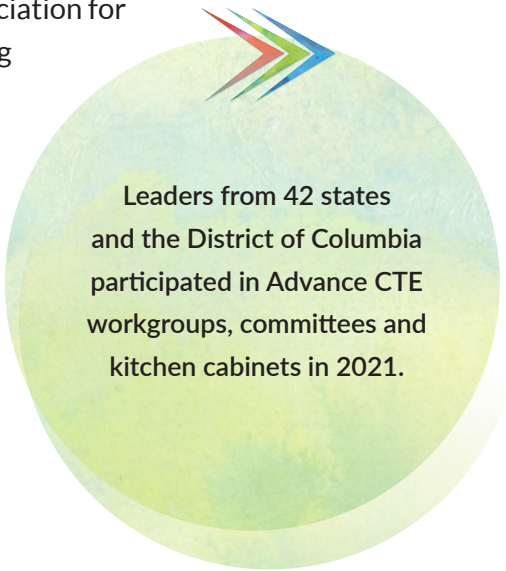
State CTE leaders from 14 states joined the Social Capital Shared Solutions Workgroup to understand the intersection of CTE and social capital. Advance CTE sought to determine a baseline for State Directors' understanding of social capital and the benefit of building social capital for CTE learners, as well as how to engage CTE learners in building their own social capital. Wonder Strategies for Good led a message- and messenger-testing exercise, and the group indicated that a descriptive, plain-language explanation – the relationships learners have and will leverage that deliver career success – was more effective than using the term “social capital.”

“A young person’s career prospects could be defined by where they grew up or what their parents do for a living. Social capital is the bridge to connect what they are doing in schools to the career path they are seeking.”

– Marina McHatton

To arm our members and the broader CTE community with the tools they need to authentically engage learners, Advance CTE also convened a Shared Solutions Workgroup on Leveraging and Elevating the Learner Voice in CTE that brought together eight states, 10 national organizations and eight CTE learners from across the country. With input and guidance from this workgroup, Advance CTE released *With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE* in partnership with the Association for Career and Technical Education. In 2022, Advance CTE will be offering targeted technical assistance to a cohort of states poised to develop strategies around learner engagement.

Finally, at the very end of 2021, Advance CTE, in partnership with Education Strategy Group, launched the Credit for Prior Learning Shared Solutions Workgroup, which will work to develop a new policy benchmark tool for release in 2022.



Leaders from 42 states and the District of Columbia participated in Advance CTE workgroups, committees and kitchen cabinets in 2021.

# ELEVATE

high-quality and equitable CTE.

To build a supportive environment that ensures that all stakeholders – from federal policymakers to learners and families – understand the value of CTE, Advance CTE works with our members and partners to promote strong policy and practice, address ongoing misconceptions about CTE, and continue to push CTE forward to remain responsive to industry and learner needs.

## **Elevating High-Quality CTE Models and Policies**

Throughout the past year, Advance CTE published and disseminated research around the prevalence and importance of area technical centers (ATCs) through a microsite, <https://areatechnicalcenters.org/>. Our research revealed almost 1,400 unique, largely open-access institutions serving learners of all levels. Highlighting these centers put a spotlight on their role in increasing equity and access in statewide postsecondary attainment, and sharing this research launched dialogues with multiple state leaders about how to bring ATCs more fully into the CTE space.

“CTE is a complex education program, and finding an organization filled with deep expertise on driving quality CTE at a state level is beyond valuable.”

– Advance CTE Member



In addition, Advance CTE supports six sites as part of a five-year partnership with JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Education Strategy Group known as the *New Skills ready network*. These six state-local partnerships are advancing high-quality and equitable career pathways systems, with a heavy focus on improving equitable career advising, data quality and secondary and postsecondary alignment during 2021.

More than 150 local and state leaders joined two virtual convenings to showcase accomplishments, attend workshops featuring state and national career pathways leaders, and participate in networking and problem solving. Members gained knowledge about site priorities and accomplishments through the *New Skills ready network's* first [annual report and site snapshots](#) and a recurring [site highlight blog series](#). Each snapshot highlighted key state initiatives and collaborations that serve as the foundation for local work. To bring the lessons and promising practices from the New Skills ready network sites to the broader Advance CTE community, we shared [multiple pathways-focused resources](#), including a [strengthening career pathways policy brief series](#), to guide CTE leaders in enhancing the quality, equity and alignment of specific components of career pathways.



In 2021, 42 state and territorial legislatures passed 147 policy actions in areas such as equity/ access and work-based learning or pre-apprenticeship, more than double the number of policies passed in 2020.

## Elevating CTE Through Effective Communications and Messaging

Advance CTE continues to develop our role as a national leader in research and practice in effective communications and messaging for CTE program recruitment. In partnership with the Siemens Foundation, Advance CTE followed up on previous research to find out what families value most in their education. The findings were released along with messaging tools and communications planning resources to assist states in their recruitment practices. A fourth state cohort launched, providing Alaska, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Oklahoma funding and technical assistance to pilot recruitment initiatives based on the research, with a focus on increasing the enrollment of historically marginalized populations.

Advance CTE's communications research expanded to include a report on a national survey of more than 300 employers released in fall 2021 to aid members in understanding employer attitudes toward CTE, skill-building needs and alignment, and areas for growth in employer engagement.

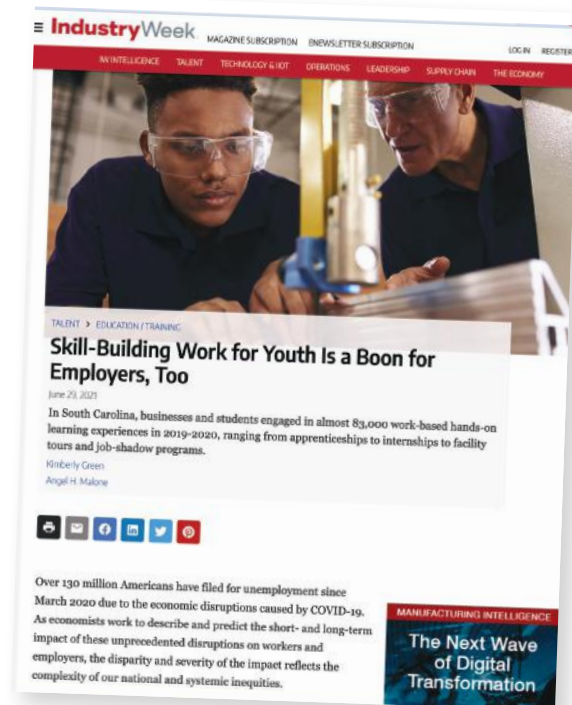
## Elevating the Value of CTE at the Federal Level

Advance CTE’s founding purpose and a current organizational hallmark is to elevate the collective voice of state CTE leaders with the legislative and executive branches of the federal government. With the leadership transitions resulting from the 2020 elections, Advance CTE began the year by centering our advocacy efforts on relationship building and sharing a set of *transition priorities* and *policy recommendations* with the Biden-Harris transition team. In his second month in office, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona brought greetings to the Advance CTE Spring Meeting. Secretary Cardona has established career pathways as one of just four priorities for the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Advance CTE helped to secure an additional \$52.25 million for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act’s basic state grant program, bringing the total funding level for the program to approximately \$1.335 billion — a high watermark since 2010. Our advocacy was instrumental in ensuring that nearly \$120 billion in allotted education funding in the American Rescue Plan included CTE programs and activities as an allowable activity. Advance CTE crafted a guide to support state CTE leaders in accessing and equitably deploying these resources and advocated for CTE community needs being represented in USDE guidance.

## Elevating the Visibility of CTE

The Advance CTE staff is proud to build relationships with state and national media outlets to elevate the role of state leaders in advancing high-quality, innovative CTE. South Carolina’s apprenticeship programs were featured in an *IndustryWeek op-ed* on the benefits of work-based learning for both employers and learners. Advance CTE secured a grant to offer messaging and subject-matter training and support to the *Higher Education Media Fellowship at the Institute for Citizens & Scholars*, which aims to support journalists in increasing their knowledge of postsecondary education and particularly CTE.

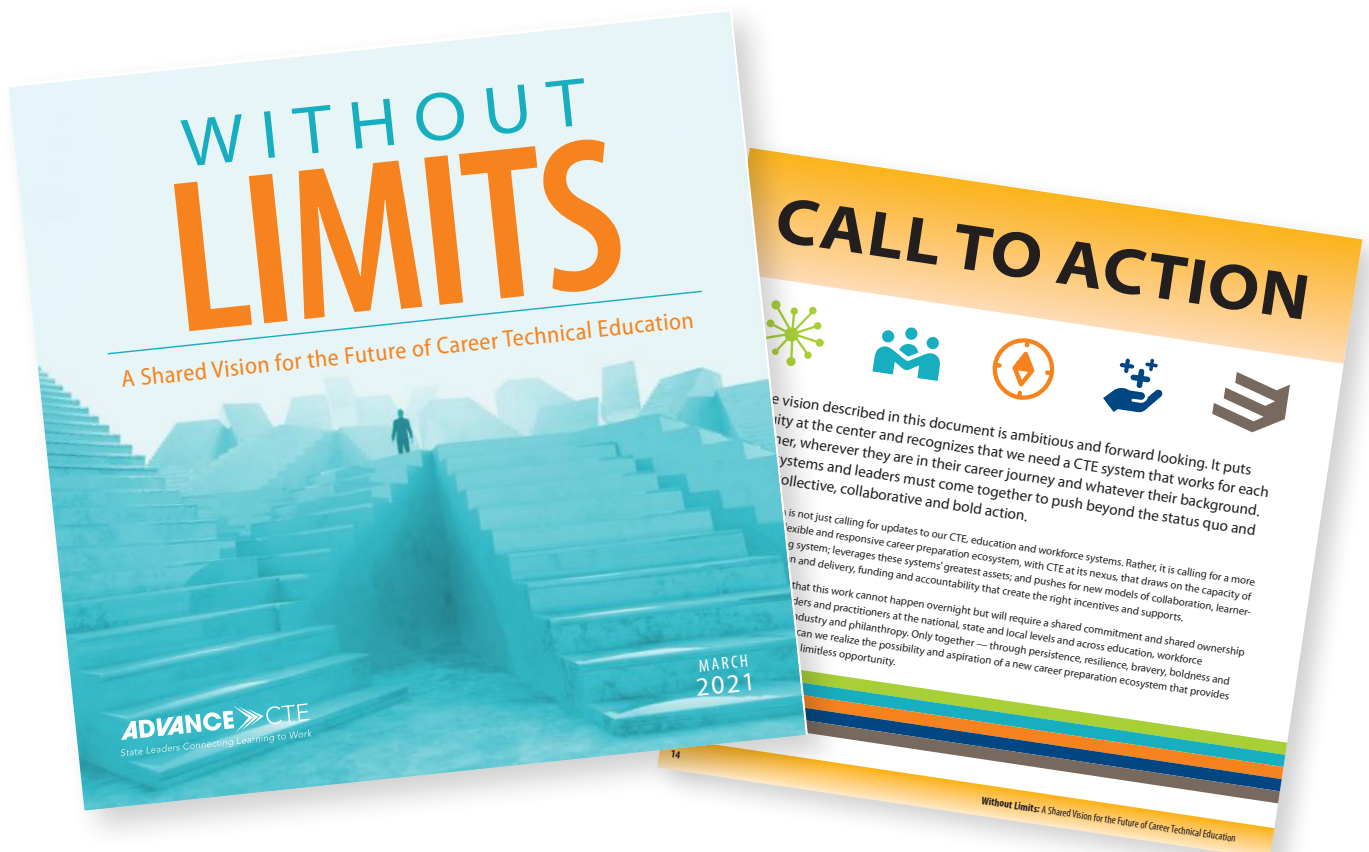


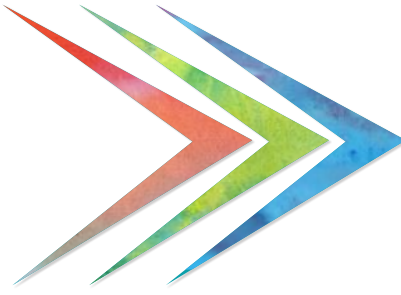
Advance CTE staff presented 75 times in 2021, serving as keynotes, panelists, moderators and facilitators at virtual and in-person events and conferences.



# The Year Ahead

In June 2021, the Advance CTE and The Center to Advance CTE's Boards of Directors unanimously approved a new three-year strategic plan with three key strategic priorities — to **EQUIP** Advance CTE to lead with a focus on quality and equity, **EMPOWER** members to realize the *CTE Without Limits* vision, and **ELEVATE** high-quality and equitable CTE.





As always, Advance CTE will continue to **EQUIP** our members and ourselves to lead the CTE field with a fierce commitment to quality and equity through interactive and engaging professional development events and resources, such as our annual convenings and ongoing virtual learning sessions. We are excited to launch our second cohort of the Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellowship — Sponsored by ECMC Foundation in early 2022, as well as plans to establish affinity groups for members of color to build community. The Advance CTE team will also expand our internal commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through our own professional development and by applying an equity lens to all that we do.

We will also **EMPOWER** our members to advance and realize the principles and actions in *CTE Without Limits* by providing the tools, resources and supports the field needs to drive a robust and equity-focused agenda forward. In early 2022, Advance CTE will launch our Advancing CTE Without Limits initiative, providing direct technical assistance to three states and offering a community of practice to engage the cross-sector partners that need to be involved to realize the vision. We will also support new cohorts of states through our Opportunity Gap Analysis Workshops and roll out a new CTE equity index, designed to help CTE leaders consider and prioritize all dimensions of equity in their work. We will engage in extended research projects around the *CTE Without Limits*-aligned topics of state CTE funding models and how to expand CTE within and across state borders, with support from the Walton Family Foundation.

Finally, Advance CTE will continue our charge to **ELEVATE** high-quality and equitable CTE among federal and state policymakers, the media and other key stakeholders, including families and learners, to ensure that all learners can realize the full benefits of CTE. We will collaborate with partners to ensure that CTE is central to federal policy and spending priorities, further deepen our relationships with congressional offices and members of the media, and build capacity among our members to effectively communicate CTE's value proposition. One way we will support our members is by hosting workshops for counseling professionals in 30 states to arm these champions with the messages and information they need to recruit learners into high-quality and equitable CTE programs of study.



**ADVANCE**  **CTE**

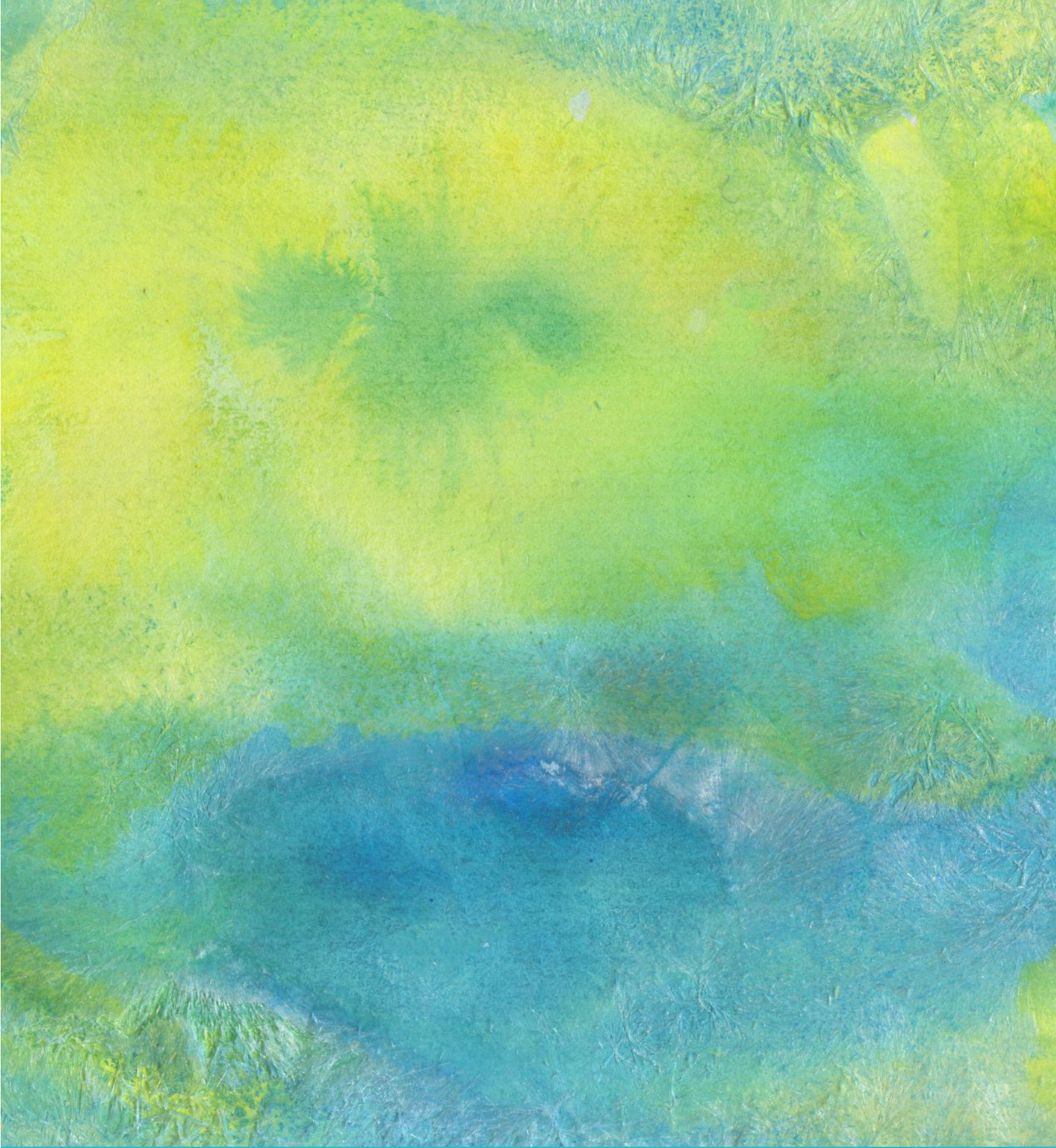
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