

Advance CTE Transition Priorities

For the Biden- Harris Administration

Advance CTE is the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State CTE Directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. With its members, Advance CTE works to transform and expand CTE so that each learner – of any background, age and zip code – is prepared for career and college success through state leadership, advocacy and partnerships.

CTE provides middle school, high school, postsecondary and adult learners with the knowledge, real-world skills, supports and experiences they need to be prepared for a lifetime of successful careers, earning family-sustaining wages. CTE programs prepare learners along a continuum that begins with early career exposure and extends through career preparation, leading to occupations in every sector of the economy.ⁱ CTE is offered across the entire country and has served more than 11 million learners every year for the past 10 years.ⁱⁱ The secondary graduation rate for learners who take a concentration of CTE courses is about 94 percent, approximately 11 percent higher than the national average.ⁱⁱⁱ The estimated impact of achieving a 90 percent graduation rate nationwide is a \$5.7 billion increase in economic growth and \$664 million in additional federal, state and local taxes.^{iv} Similar success rates are seen at the postsecondary level. 86 percent of adult learners concentrating in CTE become employed or continue their education within six months of program completion.^v In fact, the overall postsecondary completion rate is nearly double for learners in CTE programs (56.8 percent) compared to all two-year institutions (29 percent).^{vi}

In order to achieve a full, equitable economic recovery and ensure that every learner has access to high-quality Career Technical Education, the next Administration must:

- Embrace and promote CTE as a valued pathway for learners.
- Make CTE a central part of the Administration’s economic recovery strategy.
- Promote inter-connected education and workforce development systems.
- Eliminate structures that embed systemic racism in education and workforce programs.
- Ensure that states are fully supported in the implementation of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act during COVID-19, including CTE-designated funding and statutory flexibility and waivers.
- Attend to CTE-related challenges and supports during COVID-19 response and recovery.
- Double the federal investment in CTE to respond to the need and demand for high-quality CTE.
- Expand Pell Grant eligibility.

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Below are more details on each priority.

Embrace and promote CTE as a valued pathway for learners.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has affected the most foundational aspects of our society, including our education systems and the nation's economy. Perspectives of what are essential jobs are also shifting, with a newfound appreciation for careers in health care, manufacturing, transportation etc. There is an opportunity, and a responsibility, to invest in and reform education and workforce systems so that each learner in the country has equitable access and supports to follow a pathway of their choosing that leads to a livable wage and career progression. To achieve this goal, any lingering stigma associated with CTE and its status as elective must be eliminated. In recent years, Advance CTE commissioned focus groups and a national survey to explore attitudes and perceptions of parents and learners currently enrolled in CTE, as well as prospective CTE parents and learners. The study found that just under half (47 percent) of prospective parents and students had ever heard the term "Career Technical Education." 89 percent of prospective parents and students cited a favorable impression of CTE after they were given a description. At the same time, parents and students engaged in CTE reported higher levels of satisfaction across nearly all aspects of their educational experience compared to parents and students not engaged in CTE.^{vii} The value of CTE is evident, but an awareness challenge remains.

Make CTE a central part of the Administration's economic recovery strategy.

With millions of Americans unemployed, Black and Latinx workers, workers with a high school education or less and female workers have been disproportionately impacted.^{viii} A significant number of learners of all ages need fast but quality upskilling and reskilling through avenues such as short-term programs that will result in living-wage, in-demand careers. While there is great uncertainty about the pandemic's ongoing and long-term impact on our country, there is certainty that CTE is vital to recovery because of its proven track record.

With millions of Americans unemployed, Black and Latinx workers, workers with a high school education or less and female workers have been disproportionately impacted.

- The postsecondary completion rate is nearly doubled for learners in CTE programs (close to 57 percent) compared to all two-year institutions (29 percent).
- 86 percent of adult CTE learners continue their education or are employed within six months of completing a program.^{ix}
- About one-third of CTE learners are enrolled in programs in leading fields such as health care, information technology and Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) - careers that are especially important during the Coronavirus.^x

Advance CTE Transition Priorities

For the Biden- Harris Administration

- After the last recession, the majority of new or replacement jobs went to employees with more than a high school diploma, including 3.1 million jobs that went to those with an associate's degree or postsecondary certificates.^{xi}

Through CTE, displaced workers can upskill and reskill and prepare for reentry into the workforce and employers can find a pipeline of well-qualified talent who can adapt to and thrive in the ever-changing world of work. Therefore, CTE, must be invested in and be a primary strategy for economic recovery and an equitable return to full employment.

Promote inter-connected education and workforce development systems.

CTE sits at the intersection of education, workforce development and economic development. And every sector of the labor market needs skilled workers. There must be a coordinated national effort across all cabinet-level agencies to eliminate access barriers; increase support services; eliminate benefits cliffs; reduce inefficiencies; expand, align and leverage investments for the purpose increasing learner success and accomplishment of credentials of value. This cross-agency, cabinet-level collaboration should be led by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Eliminate structures that embed systemic racism in education and workforce programs.

States have positioned equity at the center of their Perkins V plans, with a commitment to address the systemic racism and inequities that have historically existed in CTE. Though some progress has been made, there is more work to be done. There is an important and valuable federal role in doing this work. Deep, systemic work is needed to unroot the legacy of racism in our country. This is work we must all do together. Here are three specific priorities that can help CTE make progress:

- ***Develop and support a diverse CTE educator workforce:*** Across the country, State CTE Directors consistently report a persistent shortage of CTE instructors. This is compounded by the stark reality that CTE instructors are often not racially representative of its learners. Intentional efforts are needed to cultivate and diversify the CTE educator and leadership workforce and pipeline. Investing in the restoration of CTE teacher preparation and leadership programs, with an intentional focus on diversity, is needed. Moreover, greater flexibility should be given to teacher preparation programs to recruit and support diverse mid-career professionals seeking to transition into the classroom through alternative pathways to certification, while continuing to maintain high-quality standards for recruitment.
- ***Expand statewide data system capacity, transparency and utilization:*** Accurate, timely, actionable and transparent data is essential to ensuring that:
 - Learners and their families can be informed consumers of the education system;
 - Educators can identify opportunity gaps and work to close them; and
 - Educational leaders, stakeholders and policymakers can retire ineffective or outdated programs and proactively start new programs to meet emerging labor market needs.

Advance CTE Transition Priorities

For the Biden- Harris Administration

Investments are need in data system capacity, cross-system and learner level coordination, data literacy and utilization and the federal ban on the creation of a student unit record system must be repealed.

- **Promote an education system that values all learning:** CTE programs have long acknowledged that learners gain skills and knowledge outside of the classroom. However, this learning is often not valued or recognized by traditional higher education. Competency-based education and credit for prior learning have existed for some time but have not been scaled nor implemented equitably. Now is the time to take these proven strategies, that especially help nontraditional learners and veterans, from the margins and bring them mainstream. Competency-based education and credit for prior learning values an individual's full scope of experience, which leads to efficiency in program completion and demonstrates value for lifelong learning. The Experimental Sites Initiative, contained in current Higher Education Act (HEA), which supports such programs in limited instances, should be fully scaled.

Ensure that states are fully supported in the implementation of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act during COVID-19, including CTE-designated funding and statutory flexibility and waivers.

As states navigate the first academic year of implementing their four-year state plans for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), additional statutory, policy, regulatory and spending flexibility may be needed. COVID-19 has disrupted and impacted the delivery of CTE including the ability for learners to participate in hands-on, work-based learning experiences; sit for assessments that result in meaningful industry- recognized credentials and connect directly with employers. These challenges, compounded by systemic inequities, present specific and complex challenges when being delivered remotely. In order to ensure that every CTE program is high-quality and able to meet the immediate needs of each learner and community they serve, the following flexibilities may be needed with regard to Perkins V:

There is an opportunity, and a responsibility, to invest in and reform education and workforce systems so that each learner in the country has equitable access and supports to follow a pathway of their choosing that leads to a livable wage and career progression.

- Ensure that states that have selected an agency other than a state education agency to be its Perkins eligible agency has the same flexibilities as those afforded to state education agencies;^{xii}
- Allow states and local eligible recipients to carryforward funds across academic and fiscal years;
- Offer flexibility in reporting and adjusting state performance levels given disruptions in assessments and data collection;

Advance CTE Transition Priorities

For the Biden- Harris Administration

- Grant temporary waivers of supplement not supplant requirements;
- Waive the definition of “professional development” consistent with flexibility already afforded to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA);
- Broaden Perkins V pooling flexibility to promote efficiencies and collaboration across districts and learner levels;
- Ensure maintenance of effort flexibility, given the reality of state budgets; and
- Provide flexibility with regard to the comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA) implementation.

Attend to CTE-related challenges and supports during COVID-19 response and recovery.

CTE delivers real-world skills and hands on learning and the Coronavirus has challenged these hallmarks of CTE. But in challenge lies opportunity - the opportunity to make CTE more accessible through virtualization of CTE instruction while maintaining rigor and quality. Investments are needed to build the digital and physical infrastructure; craft new employer-informed curriculum that integrates augmented and virtual reality; provide educators with professional development in how to leverage the new curriculum and technology; expand access to remote learning resources that ensure equity in delivery; and innovate and expand the delivery of virtual work-based learning and preparation to serve displaced workers.

Double the federal investment in CTE to respond to the need and demand for high-quality CTE.

Despite its value and impact, CTE has been chronically underfunded. The federal investment in CTE was relatively flat between 1991 and 2017, and the program’s buying power fell by approximately \$933 million in inflation-adjusted dollars (a 45 percent reduction).^{xiii} Federal funding in CTE has incrementally increased since Fiscal Year 2017, but these increases still do not bring Perkins funding to the level it would be if only keeping pace with inflation.

Expanding the federal investment in CTE programs will lead to more career options for each learner, better results for employers, and increased growth for our economy. To keep pace with demand, make up for losses due to inflation and ensure our country and its learners remain competitive, the federal investment in CTE be doubled through increases in Perkins V.

Expand Pell Grant Eligibility

The Federal Pell Grant Program is often the means by which low-income learners are able to pursue postsecondary education. And yet, many learners are unable to access this vital program to pursue their chosen career pathway due to federal higher education policy that not kept pace with the composition and needs of today’s learners.

Advance CTE Transition Priorities

For the Biden- Harris Administration

- **Expand Pell Grant Eligibility for Short-Term Programs.** A large and rapidly increasing portion of all postsecondary learners enroll in noncredit courses, and this figure is expected to continue to grow.^{xiv} These programs typically lead to a postsecondary credential that often has a more immediate connection to an occupational skill or competency than most associate or baccalaureate degree programs and are frequently offered at a substantially lower cost to learners.^{xv} Despite this, postsecondary learners enrolled in many short-term education and training programs are ineligible to access federal financial aid under current law due to overly burdensome program length requirements. That is why there must be an update to the current program length requirements for learner financial aid eligibility under Title IV of HEA for programs that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential, as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and demonstrate a connection to an in-demand or high-growth occupational sector that aligns with local, regional or state needs. Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to include short-term programs that can lead to a recognized postsecondary certificate, license or credential is an essential step to leveling the field for learners of all backgrounds to pursue meaningful and diverse career pathways.
- **Expand Pell Grant Eligibility for Incarcerated Individuals.** Since 1994, those incarcerated who would otherwise be eligible, have been denied access to Pell Grants. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education began the Second Chance Pell pilot, renewed in 2019, that opened Pell Grants to prisoners in the experimental sites included in this program. Eliminating the ban on Pell in all prisons would give hundreds of thousands access to postsecondary education and allow these learners to pursue meaningful employment when released from prison. Reinstating Pell Grants in Prisons will allow all learners the opportunity for postsecondary attainment and set them up for career success.

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Visit the Following Resources to Learn More About CTE:

- [What is CTE?](#) - video
- [CTE's role in the economic recovery](#) – video
- [State CTE Profiles](#)
- [The State of CTE: An Analysis of States' Perkins V Priorities](#)
- [CTE Fact Sheets](#)
- [COVID-19's Impact on CTE](#)
- [Secondary CTE and Economic Recovery](#)
- [Postsecondary CTE and Economic Recovery](#)

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ⁱ <https://careertech.org/career-clusters>

ⁱⁱ <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Refers to Program Year 2017-18. Source: <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/Performance>

^{iv} Refers to the Graduating Class of 2015: <http://graduationeffect.org/US-GradEffect-Infographic.pdf>

^v <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/Performance>

^{vi} https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE_Attainment_Goals_2018%20.pdf

^{vii} https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/The_Value_Promise_Career_Technical_Education_2017.pdf. This study was made possible with support from the Siemens Foundation.

^{viii} <https://www.bls.gov/cps/effects-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic.htm>

^{ix} <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/>

^x <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/>

^{xi} <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Americas-Divided-Recovery-web.pdf>

^{xii} In the following states, the Perkins eligible agency is not the state education agency: AR, CO, HI, IA, ID, KS, LA, MN, MT, ND, OK, WA, WI and Guam

^{xiii} Calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation Calculator <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>

^{xiv} <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/noncredit-education-in-community-college.pdf>

^{xv} <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/noncredit-education-in-community-college.pdf>