

National Report Finds Career Readiness Data Systems Not Meeting Demands

Silver Spring, Maryland - April 16, 2019 - Today, Advance CTE released a major report examining how states are collecting and using Career Technical Education (CTE) and career readiness data. ***The State of CTE: Improving Data Quality and Effectiveness*** found that less than half of State CTE Directors have enough confidence in their current data systems to give them the information they need to make meaningful programmatic and policy decisions about secondary and postsecondary CTE. However, nearly 90 percent of State Directors say that improving their state CTE data system is a top priority moving forward.

Major findings include:

- **States are hesitant to use their data for high-stakes decisionmaking:** States often use CTE and career readiness data for low-stakes decisions such as informing technical assistance, but are less likely to use their data to influence funding and decisions to transform or phase out CTE programs.
- **CTE data systems are not sufficiently aligned across the secondary, postsecondary and workforce sectors:** According to the survey, less than half of State Directors say their CTE data system is “mostly” or “fully” aligned with secondary data systems, a number that drops to 28 percent with postsecondary data systems and just 18 percent with workforce data systems.
- **Many states rely on self-reported measures of career readiness and do not often use rigorous validation processes:** At the secondary level, 61 percent of states use student surveys, which have notoriously low response rates and are difficult to validate, to identify whether learners secure post-program employment. About a third of states report using student surveys to measure post-program outcomes, including entry into the workforce or continued education and training, for postsecondary program completers.

While these findings show that there is much work to be done to improve and align CTE data systems, the recently reauthorized Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) gives states an exciting opportunity to improve data quality and effectiveness.

Despite the current challenges, the report also finds some exciting and innovative practices states are using to collect and validate their data. For example, forty-five percent of states have developed an agreement with the state Department of Labor or other related agency to collect post-program employment data, and forty-one percent of states are partnering with the National Student Clearinghouse to identify learners who continue their postsecondary education or training at another program or institution.

"CTE has a unique position at the intersection of secondary and postsecondary education and the workforce. It is critical for state leaders to work together to effectively use and improve their data systems to make more informed decisions about CTE program quality and equity in order to serve each learner in their community," said Kimberly Green, Executive Director of Advance CTE. "Right now, states have the opportunity to improve data quality and effectiveness through Perkins V. We look forward to working with state leaders as they examine their data collection

practices, establish cross-sector data sharing partnerships, and embed data-driven decisionmaking throughout policy and practice."

This report was developed in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Strategy Group, the Workforce Data Quality Campaign, a project of the National Skills Coalition, and the Data Quality Campaign through the New Skills for Youth initiative.

Statements of Support from Partners

"With access to current, accurate, and robust data, state education and workforce agencies can support students to successfully transition out of high school, no matter what path they choose." said Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, president and CEO of the Data Quality Campaign. Without these linkages, states are leaving families in the dark about whether their students will leave the K–12 system work ready."

"By aligning state planning cycles with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and adopting some of WIOA's common performance measures for postsecondary CTE, Perkins V can help states, schools, and colleges have a better understanding of how students progress through K-12, postsecondary education, and the workforce," said Bryan Wilson, Director, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, a project of National Skills Coalition.

This report offers helpful national context and highlights promising practices states can look to as they improve their data systems and continue to advance quality career pathways for all students that ensure their success in college, careers and life," said Najmah Ahmad, Program Director of the Career Readiness Initiative at the Council of Chief State School Officers.

"Data systems to monitor student outcomes and ensure alignment with changing economic demands remain significantly underdeveloped and underutilized," said Matt Gandal, President of Education Strategy Group. "Data should be an asset in this work, and instead, it's our achilles heel. We must build better linkages across sectors so that educators and policy makers can have actionable data to support students' success."

The State of CTE report is based on data from a 50-state survey that was issued to State Directors in fall 2018. A total of 51 State Directors completed the survey, representing 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia.

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[About Advance CTE](#)

Advance CTE is the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State Directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories. Established in 1920, Advance CTE supports visionary state leadership, cultivates best practices and speaks with a collective voice on national policy to promote academic and technical excellence that ensures a career-ready workforce.