FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENTS
BREAKOUT ROOMS

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FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENTS
BREAKOUT DESCRIPTIONS

Career Advisement & Transition Supports

The transitions between secondary, postsecondary and the workforce can be complex and difficult to navigate for many learners. Despite the promise of “on and off ramps” along CTE programs and adult career pathways, these are not always well defined or supported by a comprehensive system of advisement and supports that enable learners to benefit from them and have the flexibility to gain the skills and credentials they need, when they need them.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what supports, programs, policies and people need to be in place to ensure each learner can seamlessly transition between education and the workforce - taking full advantage of quality educational and career pathways’ on and off ramps. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider what a high-quality career advisement system looks like, what supports need to be in place to help learners at key transition points, the role of early warning systems, and how systems collaborate to ensure learner success.

Data & Accountability

When constructed appropriately, accountability systems are a powerful lever to promote high-quality CTE opportunities for learners, sending signals of what outcomes should be prioritized, celebrated and addressed. And data is a powerful tool in the design, validation, delivery and assessment of CTE programs and experiences. However, accountability systems are not the only incentives that can drive state and local improvements in our CTE, education and workforce systems and many leaders find themselves with a lot of data but no capacity or tools to make it actionable.

Looking forward, contributors will consider the full power of data, accountability and incentives to ensure high-quality and equitable CTE for each learner. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider improvements that need to be made to ensure that data and information can more readily be shared; how to ensure institutions have access to timely, accurate information learner-level data and labor market information; how data should be leveraged to drive the quality of and equitable access to CTE programs and experiences; and what incentives and accountability systems should exist to strengthen the CTE system.
Delivery Models

While there is a traditional model of CTE delivery, technological advances and the recognition that not every learner thrives in the same learning environment have helped usher in competency-based and credit for prior learning models at the secondary and postsecondary levels. In addition, with COVID-19, schools and institutions are increasingly leveraging different delivery models – in-person, virtual, hybrid, on-the-job, etc. – to deliver CTE to learners at all levels.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what high-quality CTE delivery models must include, with an eye towards equity. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider the role competency-based, credit-for-prior learning, distance learning and other systemic innovations that may disrupt when, where and how CTE is taught and how learning is documented; what key elements must be attended to for learners to gain the full set of competencies and recognized and transportable credentials they need to be successful; and how to ensure maximum flexibility in how learners engage in CTE programs throughout their lifetimes.

Equity, Access & Inclusion

Historically, CTE—once called vocational education—was an alternative educational option for learners who were considered non-college bound. As a result, a disproportionate number of low-income learners, learners of color, learners with disabilities, female learners and other historically marginalized populations were “tracked” into terminal vocational programs that denied their full potential and left them with limited opportunity. As the quality of CTE programs has vastly improved, the nature of the equity challenge in CTE has transformed. While states have worked hard and continue to work to improve the quality of CTE, many learners do not have access to these high-quality opportunities. Even when learners do have access to high-quality opportunities, they may not receive the support they need to succeed in those programs.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what a CTE system looks like that supports each learner in accessing, feeling welcome in, fully participating in and successfully completing a high-quality CTE program of study. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider what a CTE system looks like that supports all learners including historically marginalized populations; prioritizes access, diversity, equity and inclusion, and promotes economic mobility for each learner.
Industry Partnerships

High-quality CTE programs depend on industry partners to inform and validate the design, development and delivery of CTE programs of study, deliver work-based learning experiences and opportunities, and identify credentials of value. Yet, there is too often a disconnect or lag between what employers most want from CTE programs and what programs offer. At the same time, CTE leaders and programs consistently cite employer engagement as one of the biggest challenges to scaling high-quality CTE programs and work-based learning, which has only been further exacerbated by COVID-19.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what a CTE system looks like that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the ever-changing future of work, during both periods of economic recovery and growth. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider the role of business, industry and labor in supporting CTE programs and ensuring they remain responsive to industry needs, how CTE and related work-based learning should prepare learners for the future of work, how labor market information should drive program offerings, and how to balance the short-term needs of employers with the long-term success of learners.

Instruction & Instructors

Core to CTE is high-quality instruction, delivered by qualified instructors. Many states experience ongoing and pervasive CTE instructor and counselor shortages, limiting their ability to offer programs at scale. At the same time, many CTE instructors and administrators are not reflective of the demographics they serve, which is a potential barrier to further diversifying CTE programs. Traditional approaches to recruiting, preparing and retaining quality instructors and counselors have been insufficient and must be addressed.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what core competencies CTE instructors and faculty, administrators, counselors and other key support staff should possess and what a robust, diverse CTE instructor pipeline would look like. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider how to build and expand CTE instructional capacity to best meet the needs of learners, now and in the future, through traditional and alternative preparation models, quality professional development and training, and other innovative approaches to ensuring each learner has access to quality instructors and facilitators.
Quality Programs

At a minimum, high-quality CTE opportunities allow learners to engage in progressive, sequenced courses informed by rigorous course standards, align secondary and postsecondary opportunities, require industry involvement, are informed by labor market demand, provide high-quality instruction, allow learners to engage in experiential learning, prioritize access and equity and are anchored by a credential of value. None of this can be achieved without a commitment to quality at all levels of the CTE system.

Looking forward, contributors will envision what the non-negotiable elements are of a high-quality CTE program and how systems should collaborate to promote that vision for quality. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider the core elements of a quality CTE program, such as early postsecondary opportunities, experiential learning and labor market alignment; the levers for ensuring quality in all CTE programs and pathways (and for phasing out programs that do not meet quality standards); and how systems should be structured to ensure each learner is able to obtain a credential of value.

Systems Alignment

CTE sits at the nexus of K-12, postsecondary/adult and workforce development and requires strong collaboration and alignment across state agencies, policymakers, the private sector and other key stakeholders to maintain and promote quality, equity and efficiency. By design, quality CTE programs should be fully aligned across secondary and postsecondary systems and allow for seamless articulation and transfer of credit. Strong collaboration and coordination is essential for CTE programs to fully meet the needs of learners.

Looking forward, contributors will envision how systems should align and share resources to promote and deliver quality programs for each learner. To identify the non-negotiables, contributors should consider what partnerships and structures need to exist to promote systems alignment at the state and local levels and how those partnerships and structures should operate, as well as what policies, programs and priorities need to be better aligned and integrated to ensure seamless transitions and experiences for learners.