

## Why GAO Did This Study

CTE programs offer students opportunities to explore potential careers while learning technical and employability skills. Education administers funds for these programs through the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (Perkins V). For fiscal year 2021, Congress authorized about \$1.3 billion to support CTE programs through Perkins V, and about 11 million students participated in these programs in 2019-2020. Perkins V and a U.S. House of Representatives Committee report accompanying a fiscal year 2021 appropriations bill include provisions for GAO to examine CTE service and funding strategies. In addition, GAO was separately asked to review programs funded through Perkins V.

This report examines (1) strategies selected recipients of federal CTE funds have used to support their CTE programs and assist different student populations, (2) challenges CTE stakeholders face and how they are addressing them, and (3) how Education supports CTE programs.

GAO interviewed officials from Education, state officials in Delaware, Georgia, Ohio, and Washington (selected based on CTE enrollment of students from different populations, among other factors), representatives from eight CTE program providers, and 14 additional CTE stakeholders, including business representatives. GAO also reviewed CTE funding information from the eight CTE program providers; and reviewed relevant federal laws and Education documents.

View [GAO-22-104544](#). For more information, contact Dawn Locke at (202) 512-7215 or [locked@gao.gov](mailto:locked@gao.gov).

# CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

## Perspectives on Program Strategies and Challenges

### What GAO Found

Career and technical education (CTE) enables high school and college students to pursue in-demand occupations such as manufacturing jobs, and provides employers with a trained workforce. The four selected states and eight CTE program providers GAO interviewed supported different student populations through strategies such as leveraging state, local, and other federal funding; conducting needs assessments; or engaging with industry. Needs assessments can be useful tools for identifying students' needs and uncovering ways to improve CTE programs. For example, one CTE provider identified gaps in serving English learners and hired an interpreter to make information more accessible. The provider said this action increased CTE program enrollment among this population to 12 of 20 students in school year 2021-2022, compared to none in the prior school year. Selected state officials also emphasized the importance of engaging industry partners to identify work-based learning opportunities.

Selected CTE stakeholders, including state officials, program providers, and business representatives, reported long-standing challenges with delivering, accessing, and replicating CTE programs (see figure). In some cases, stakeholders provided examples of how they are addressing CTE challenges. For example, to overcome negative perceptions associated with CTE, two program providers said their schools have conducted outreach activities to inform parents about the benefits of CTE. In addition, two other stakeholders have taken steps to address challenges with limited long-term outcome data, such as developing a system that can link different data sources.

### Challenges Reported by Selected Stakeholders with Delivering, Accessing, and Replicating Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs



**Delivering** CTE programs may be challenging for providers due to:

- Funding and staff capacity
- Difficulty recruiting and retaining diverse teachers
- Negative perceptions of CTE



**Accessing** CTE programs may be challenging for students due to:

- Lack of transportation for work-based learning
- Language barriers
- Lack of support services and inflexible scheduling
- Program screening criteria
- Financial challenges



**Replicating** CTE programs may be challenging for states and providers due to:

- Limited long-term outcome data
- Limited information on evidence-based strategies

Source: GAO analysis of information obtained from interviews with selected CTE stakeholders. | GAO-22-104544

The Department of Education supports CTE programs by administering grants, providing technical assistance, partnering with other federal agencies, and expanding research. For example, Education has taken steps to expand research on strategies for improving CTE student outcomes. Education's What Works Clearinghouse is a central source of evidence on education and provides educators with information on how to improve CTE outcomes. Education officials also reported making improvements to the What Works Clearinghouse website in 2021 to enhance users' access to research on CTE.