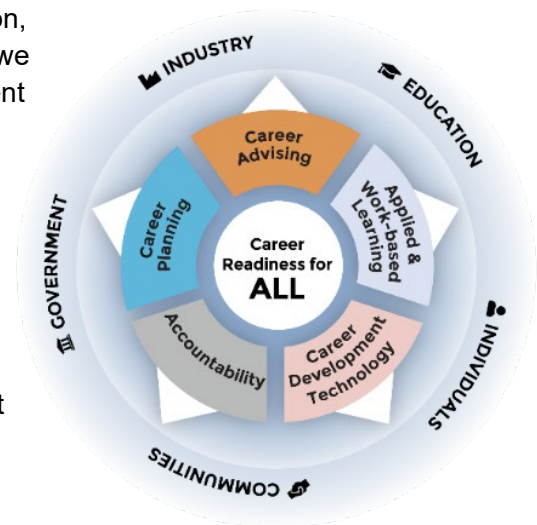


# CAREER READINESS FOR ALL A ROADMAP FOR INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT & ACTION ACROSS SECTORS

## Understanding the *Challenges*

America faces a very real and growing skills gap, and the key to closing it is making career readiness the ***first priority*** of American education. The Coalition for Career Development (CCD) Center is an industry-led effort committed to making that happen through effective collaboration with education, individuals, communities, government, and industry. Given these challenges, we strive here to clarify what is industry's most effective role in education and talent development, and under what conditions will industry support make the greatest impact. We firmly believe that we can all target this work from our respective perspectives and simultaneously work together to create real, sustainable change.

Our work maps to five core pillars that support ALL learners' ability to succeed and thrive in today's employment landscape. These pillars address the entire career development lifecycle, empowering all stakeholders to promote positive change in our nation's education and workforce development systems.



## Identifying the *Opportunities*

In May 2023, the CCD Center convened its Executive Board, Advisory Council, and State Leaders Career Development Network to gain their insight into ways to reform our nation's career readiness infrastructure by leveraging the promise of four landmark pieces of federal legislation:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Higher Education Act (HEA)
- Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (Perkins V)

At the convening, participants were grouped into five Pillar Committees, each focused on a different pillar and charged with identifying challenges and opportunities within its context. The following is a summary of action steps the CCD Center and its partners across sectors can take to create a national career readiness infrastructure.

The following action steps reflect the viewpoints and suggestions put forth by the respective committees and are not intended to solicit funding. Participants offered their recommendations purely in an advisory capacity, aimed at fostering collaboration, innovation, and progress.



## Prioritizing Career Planning

**Career planning** is facilitated by adult mentors and consists of services and activities designed to support youth and adults in defining their life goals. Informed by individual strengths and employment interests, mentors guide youth and young adults to develop goals that will help them attain the education, certification, and workforce development opportunities needed to enter and thrive in high-demand, high-wage occupational pathways.

The following are action steps the CCD Center and its partners can take to respond to identified needs related to **Career Planning**:

- Establish the specification requirements for a national career readiness infrastructure—one that provides access to quality individualized career plans from preschool to postsecondary education and focuses on talent and skill development, not just academics.
- Develop a shared definition of career readiness that can be used consistently across federal and state legislation, agencies, and other organizations. This definition should reference individualized learning plans, address equity, encompass durable skills outcomes (i.e., social, emotional, and other “soft” skills), and include all career pathways and learners of all ages.
- Identify ways to use required and allowable federal and state funding to design and implement evidence-based individualized career planning programs and services.
- Advocate for state and local governments to implement policies and practices that ensure all individualized career planning programs and services are accessible to individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including by allocating sufficient funding to offer services, programs, and support for high-need groups.
- Identify strategies for blending and braiding cross-agency federal and state funds to remove access barriers to quality career readiness and workforce development opportunities and increase the collective impact of these efforts.
- Identify and communicate promising examples of evidence-based individualized career plan programs and services.
- Align individualized career program design to [“Portrait of a Graduate” exercises](#) to ensure its impact is relevant to targeted communities or regions.
- Identify and communicate model [Perkins V Programs of Study](#) that effectively use funding to support career exploration in middle schools.
- Conduct a landscape scan of states’ individualized learning plan implementation policies to identify and disseminate promising practices and positive outcomes.



## Providing Professional Career Advising

**Career advising** encompasses services provided by a diverse range of certified professionals—whose roles and responsibilities vary—to develop youth and adults’ self-exploration capabilities, advance career exploration opportunities, and enhance planning skills. For example, career specialists support the design and evaluation of career readiness programs and services, while mentors, coaches, and counselors facilitate individualized and sequenced activities, including individualized learning plan activities, in group settings or one-on-one.

The following are action steps the CCD Center and its partners can take to respond to identified needs related to **Career Advising**:

- Support collaborative efforts with professional organizations to update career advisor certifications and training to reflect the rapidly changing nature of work.
- Collaborate with professional organizations to create and advocate for a range of professional career advising certifications.
- Create a career advising professionals community of practice through which career advisors can build their capacity to advocate for legislation that recognizes their profession and its importance to America’s workplaces and economy.
- Define the varied roles and responsibilities of, competencies of, and certifications for career mentors, coaches, counselors, facilitators, and specialists.
- Expand the Perkins V definition of career readiness and academic counseling to ensure related services are conducted within the context of the individualized learning plan activities that develop learners’ self-exploration, occupation and career exploration, and planning skills.
- Encourage the adoption of a universal definition of career advising that can be used consistently throughout federal and state legislation and across agencies and organizations. This definition should focus on helping youth navigate pathways to high-demand, high-wage opportunities, address equity, reflect a multi-tiered system of support, and be flexible to span all age groups.
- Assess and advocate for federal and state legislation guidance related to the professionalization of career advising. Cross-check other legislation in addition to the four studied to analyze differences across states.



## Emphasizing Applied and Work-Based Learning

**Applied and work-based learning (WBL)** refers to a continuum of lifelong experiences—from youth to adulthood—that increase people’s awareness of occupational pathways and the requisite skills and credentials needed to pursue and achieve them. In addition to practical application, these experiences build social capital by connecting youth and adults with mentors who can deepen their awareness and understanding of the workforce.

The following are action steps the CCD Center and its partners can take to respond to identified needs related to **Applied and WBL**:

- Design employer-sponsored, paid internship and mentorship opportunities.
- Convene relevant organizations to explore the vast range of credential definitions, including industry-recognized credentials. Then, develop shared language to be used across federal and state policies.
- Convene relevant organizations, career technology companies, policymakers, and employers to create the design specifications for a “Portable [Skills Passport](#)” that individuals update throughout individualized career plan activities.
- Justify how industry and business engagement in career readiness and workforce development promotes youth engagement and career decision-making.
- Conduct a landscape analysis of existing federal, state, and local policies and legislative language, including tax incentives, child labor laws, and liability insurance. Develop recommendations that enhance and streamline the ways in which employers can provide WBL experiences.
- Elevate WBL activities identified in existing federal and state legislation to promote simulated work experiences, mentoring opportunities, and skills-based internships for both youth and adult students, including those with disabilities.
- Convene relevant experts from both the private and public sectors to identify potential changes to existing federal and state WBL policies and incentives that could strengthen employer engagement.
- Develop a shared definition of WBL that can be used consistently across federal and state legislation, agencies, and other organizations. This definition should emphasize the importance of durable skills, technical skills, and career planning.



## Providing High-Quality Career Development Technology

**Career development technology** includes a range of innovative technology tools and practices that enhance learners' career development planning and exploration, access to applied and WBL opportunities, and, ultimately, career outcomes.

The following are action steps the CCD Center and its partners can take to respond to identified needs related to **Career Development Technology**:

- Create a matrix of career development technology products features and functionalities to support strategies for consumers to assess how the products align to their needs.
- Strengthen relevant federal legislation to ensure equitable access to technology and internet access for all, including in rural areas.
- Ensure that federal policy includes provisions to protect user safety and maintain data security.
- Clarify the types of technology and their multiple purposes mentioned in federal legislation that pertains to different populations to identify opportunities to increase access and efficiency.

## Ensuring Accountability

**Accountability** means establishing clear and consistent standards, input measures, and outcome indicators for career development and career readiness at the state and national levels and requires schools, districts, states, and other stakeholders to measure progress toward goals.

The following are action steps the CCD Center and its partners can take to respond to identified needs related to **Accountability**:

- Promote a shared and integrated approach that positions accountability for career readiness as a “team sport” across stakeholder groups, including family and industry, and identify best practices that leverage stakeholder collaboration and partnerships.
- Create an accountability framework for career readiness that allows stakeholders to leverage existing services and resources and maximize available funding.
- Clearly define and differentiate federal- and state-level accountability practices around career readiness.
- Strengthen legislative language and provisions that focus on ensuring equitable access to career readiness programs and services.
- Require high school students to complete [Personalized Career and Academic Plans](#) (PCAPs) before graduation and track whether students are pursuing those plans after graduation.
- Examine required and allowable activities in legislative language to identify how they align with career readiness programs and services.
- Advocate for state and federal data sharing on student outcomes and future wage earnings by expanding the career and technical education outcome data infrastructure for all students. In doing so, states can receive credit for graduates who enter work, postsecondary education, and military pathways.
- Conduct and disseminate career readiness-focused accountability research and evaluations, including on outcomes and return on investment.



- Promote strategies that target employer accountability in career readiness, including:
  - Reconsider degree requirements for positions that may only require specialized training or experience.
  - Provide upskilling and reskilling to grow and reward existing talent (e.g., covering the costs of degrees and certificates).
  - Provide clear opportunities and pathways for employees to grow within their organizations.
  - Take steps to eliminate bias in hiring and promotions.
  - Make accommodations for a variety of staff needs.
  - Consider positions for justice-involved job seekers.
  - Form partnerships with schools, including K-12, community colleges, universities, and credentialing programs.

## Acknowledgement & Appreciation

The CCD Center thanks all participants in the May 2023 convening, including those who chaired the various committees, as follows:



### Career Planning

*Chair: Julie Lammers, Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility, American Student Assistance*



### Applied and Work-Based Learning

*Co-Chair: Paul Perkins, President, Amatrol, Inc.*  
*Co-Chair: Dave Wilcox, President, Global Skills Xchange*



### Professional Career Advising

*Chair: Dr. Sharon Givens, President, National Career Development Association*



### Career Development Technology

*Co-Chair: Casey Welch, Vice President for Careers, Pearson Virtual Schools*  
*Co-Chair: Matt McQuillen, Co-Founder and CEO, Xello*



### Accountability

*Co-Chair: Dr. Annette Parker, President, South Central College*  
*Co-Chair: Dr. Scott Solberg, Vice President of Research, CCD Center*

## About the CCD Center

The Coalition for Career Development Center (CCD Center) is an industry-led nonpartisan coalition committed to making career readiness the ***first priority*** of American education and dedicated to transforming career development through priorities including education reform, research initiatives, stakeholder engagement, and more. Through collaborations with leaders from education, business, government, and non-profit organizations, we believe in providing ALL learners with high-quality career development services and technologies that will help secure productive employment in their chosen careers as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

To learn more and contribute to our vital work, visit us at [CCD-Center.org](https://www.CCD-Center.org).