



Resultant

**Bringing Clarity to a Critical
Statewide Workforce System**



SETTING THE STAGE

In recent years, policymakers, business leaders, and educators have given renewed attention to the role that Career and Technical Education (CTE) plays in the local and statewide economy. Formerly known as “vocational education,” CTE was established in 1913 and is intended to better prepare primarily high school-aged students for entry into the workforce by providing them with the skills employers want.

CTE in Indiana operates through an incredibly complex system with dozens of discrete governing bodies, including the state’s Department of Workforce Development, the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet, and the Department of Education. Developed over more than a century and administered by 49 separate CTE Districts—collaborations among local school corporations—the program struggled with cohesion, resource allocation, and effectiveness across disparate needs and methods for meeting them.

Because a portion of funding came from Perkins grants, CTE was required to carefully navigate associated federal benchmarks. Each district therefore attempted to serve local citizens, keep funding intact, and stretch resources to provide effective training.

THE PROBLEM

Indiana’s early vocational training effort was so far ahead of its time that it served as a model for federal programs. After decades of expansion, shifting needs, and uneven growth across the 49 CTE Districts, Indiana’s standard-setting system had become opaque. Whether it was accomplishing its important mission was difficult, at best, to determine.

CTE is delivered at the local level with funding from state and federal sources. As a result, there is no standard model through which CTE is delivered. Outcomes and outputs vary widely depending on specific areas of study. Multiple agencies play a role in its administration at the state level. And at the local level, CTE is delivered by CTE districts, which are groups of school corporations that have joined together to offer training.

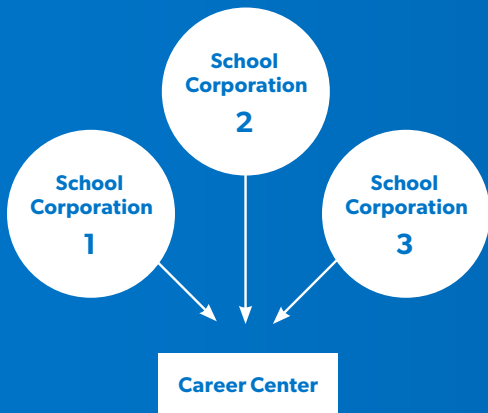
Given the complexity of CTE administration, determining whether the state was maximizing its return on investment presented a daunting challenge, as did understanding whether students and businesses received the program’s desired benefits. Because of the multitude of funding sources and administrative agencies involved, leaders had a hard time discerning whether a course met its desired outcome; it was entirely possible for a course to meet the guidelines and bring funds into the District but fail to meet a need in the community. For example, cosmetology may be cost-effective as an offering, but should it be incentivized during a period where the state faces a critical shortage of industrial mechanics?

CTE is an important element of the workforce landscape and one of few funding streams that span K-12, post-secondary, and adult education—all of which contributes to CTE’s being one of the least fully understood but most potentially valuable systems. Thinking strategically about the structure of CTE and its return on investment became a priority for the state. First, leaders and policymakers needed to understand as much as possible about how the system functioned.

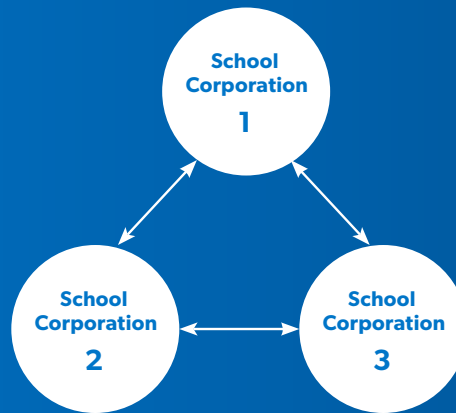
With support from the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP) engaged Resultant to provide insight into Indiana’s CTE system.



REGIONAL CAREER CENTER



REGIONAL COOPERATIVE



CONGRUENT CTE DISTRICT & SCHOOL CORPORATION



Figure 1: Given the variety and complexity of local administration approaches, even detailing who did what and how provided insight into the system.

THE APPROACH

Resultant served several roles within the project. We were brought in for our data expertise but also for our experience within the workforce and education sectors and especially because a neutral perspective was essential for finding clarity within a wide-ranging, political system that involved a dizzying number of stakeholders—often with opposing interests.

Before we could understand the current state of CTE administration, curriculum, and funding sources and uses, we needed to understand CTE's history. Only after conducting that research could we determine where to focus efforts for fact-finding and data analysis to provide productive insight.

Our discovery period included document review and interviews not just with experts who'd studied the system but with individuals who had been involved at every level. We talked with people who had participated in Indiana's CTE programming, agency staff of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), current and former CTE District directors, program instructors, current and former school system superintendents, principals, administrators, students, teachers, and employers.

Even creating transparency within the system would go a long way toward improving strategy and ROI. Our research enabled us to uncover trends in class offerings and tie them to funding and per-student costs as well as program value for students in terms of wages.

ABOUT CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN INDIANA

Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares youth and adults for a wide range of high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers. CTE's mission is to ensure an education system of high quality and equity for the academic achievement and career preparation of all Indiana students. Students in Indiana's secondary CTE programs will gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need for success in postsecondary education and for economically viable career opportunities.



After we understood the history of the program and the perspectives of the myriad individuals associated with CTE, we could begin to dig into the data. Indiana has made significant progress in recent years around the collection and use of multi-agency data. To best understand the state of CTE in Indiana, we needed to bring together multiple datasets. The State of Indiana Management Performance Hub (MPH) maintains a growing warehouse of connected education and workforce data to help inform related policy decisions and facilitated access to datasets originating from IDOE, DWD, Commission for Higher Education, and Governor’s Workforce Cabinet.

THESE QUESTIONS GUIDED OUR RESEARCH:

- Did the system structure best serve its intended outcomes?
- Were state funds and strategic goals best served by the system structure?
- How did districts receive and apply funds from each source?
- Which courses provided the greatest funding for districts?
- Which courses addressed an unmet need in the local economy?
- Did course registration align with ROI for districts?
- How did the system serve students, and where did it fall short?
- Could course delivery and ultimate vocation better align?

HIGH-DEMAND/HIGH-WAGE COURSES OFFERED AT 50% OR MORE CTE DISTRICTS

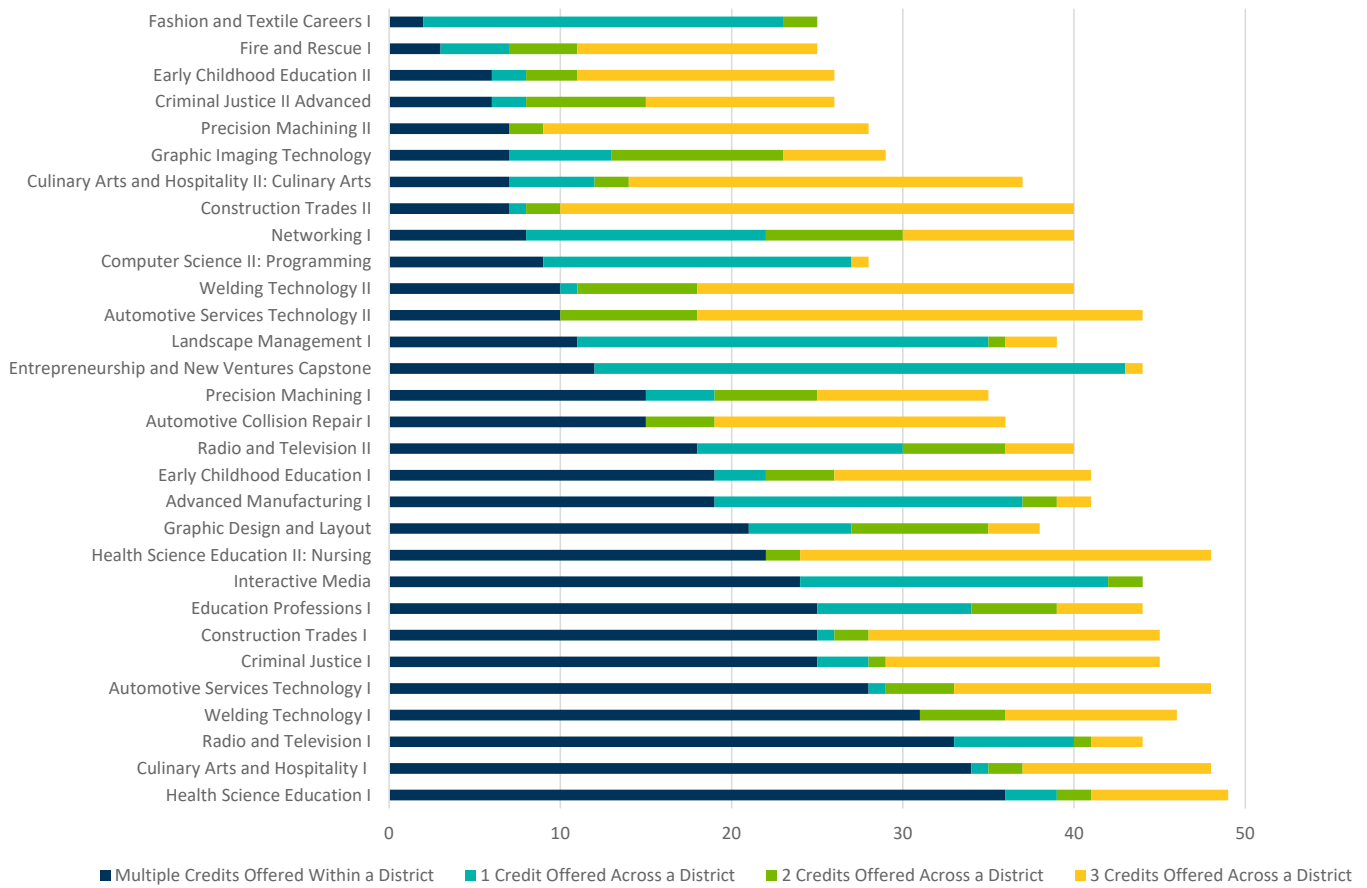


Figure 2: Data analysis showed that the courses most helpful to students weren't always the ones CTE Districts could cost-effectively integrate into their programs.





THE OUTCOME

Within a sprawling and ever-changing system, finding answers starts with simply collecting the facts. The long history of CTE in Indiana meant, not surprisingly, that not only was there a mountain of data but that it reflected some entrenched ideologies and procedures that had outlived their usefulness. We helped to create an objective, comprehensive, and meaningful compendium of information to reveal gaps in program data and opportunities for improvement.

Our in-depth report on CTE's history, administration, funding, and curriculum provided the neutral recounting of facts that might not have been possible from within the system. It gives leaders and policymakers the information they need to effect the change that the whole state is invested in.

THE IMPACT

Indiana's CTE system plays a vital role for schools, students, and employers. A new, more thorough understanding of how that system functions at every level provides stakeholders the facts they need to determine where the program can go—and to meet new challenges like remote learning and an evolving statewide economy. That clarity has informed decisions about structure and course incentives to facilitate greater effectiveness for CTE, improving outcomes for the citizens it serves.