



Invest CTE is a coalition of education professionals, industry leaders, and community partners focused on expanding access and availability of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in Illinois.

Our mission is to increase resources for high school CTE programs to better equip students with the skills needed for today's workforce.

This coalition aims to ensure that all students have the opportunity to pursue high-demand career pathways, ultimately driving economic growth and community development across the state.

What is Career and Technical Education?

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs focus on skilled trades, applied sciences, emerging technologies, and career readiness. They equip K-12 students with both academic and technical skills that support career exploration, preparation, and lifelong learning.

Why Invest in Career and Technical Education?

Career and Technical Education is the front line of Workforce Development.

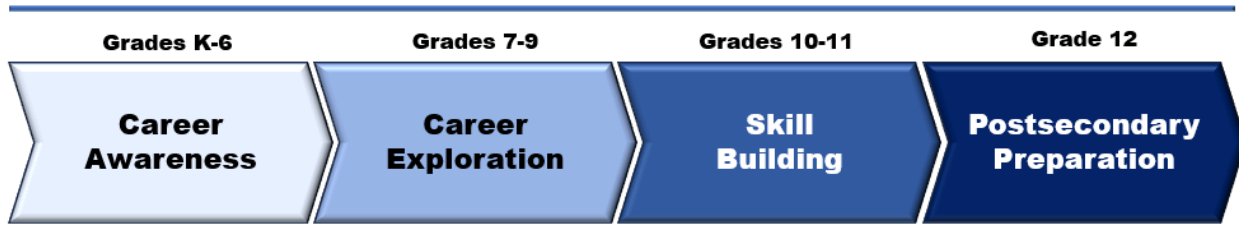
Illinois' Future of Work Task Force projects rising workforce demand through 2030, especially in technology, healthcare, and human services, alongside significant shortages in education and the skilled trades as retirements and demand outpace supply.

The report underscores that an effective workforce system must engage future workers while they are still students.

CTE turns that insight into action by:

- Expanding access and opportunities so more students can enter high-demand programs.
- Building seamless K–14 (Did we mean K-12?) pathways that link schools, districts, Area Career Centers, and community colleges (dual credit, stackable credentials, and transfer/apprenticeship on-ramps).
- Implementing a statewide career learning progression (career awareness → career exploration → skill building → postsecondary preparation) so students graduate job-ready.

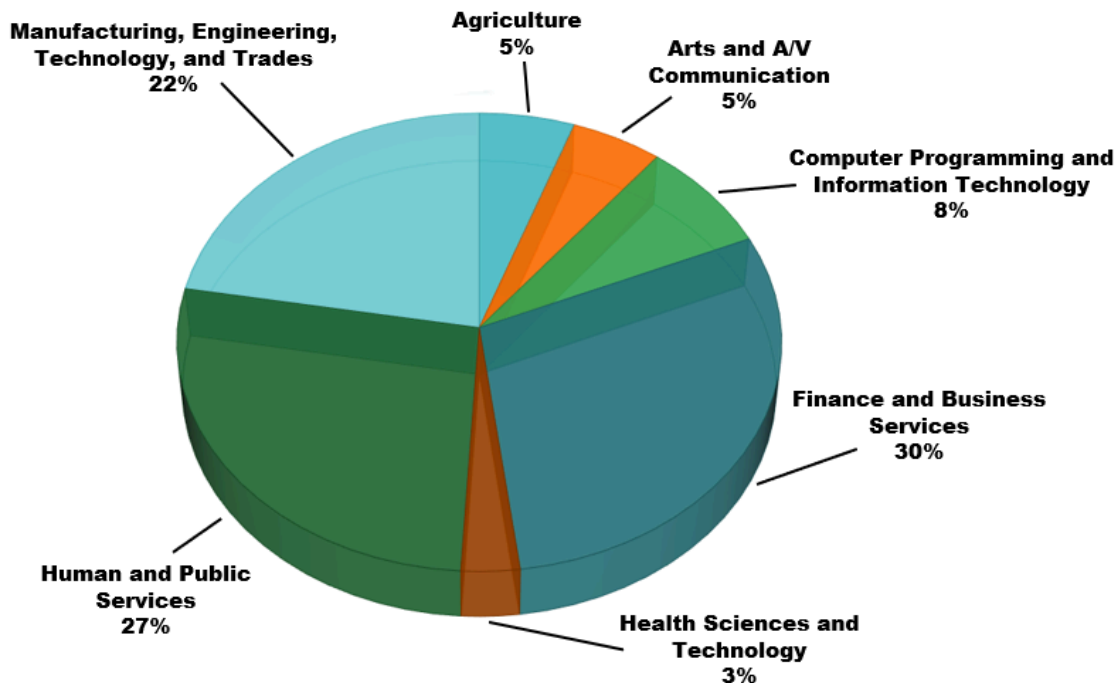
K-12 CTE Continuum



CTE Drives Workforce Growth and Student Success

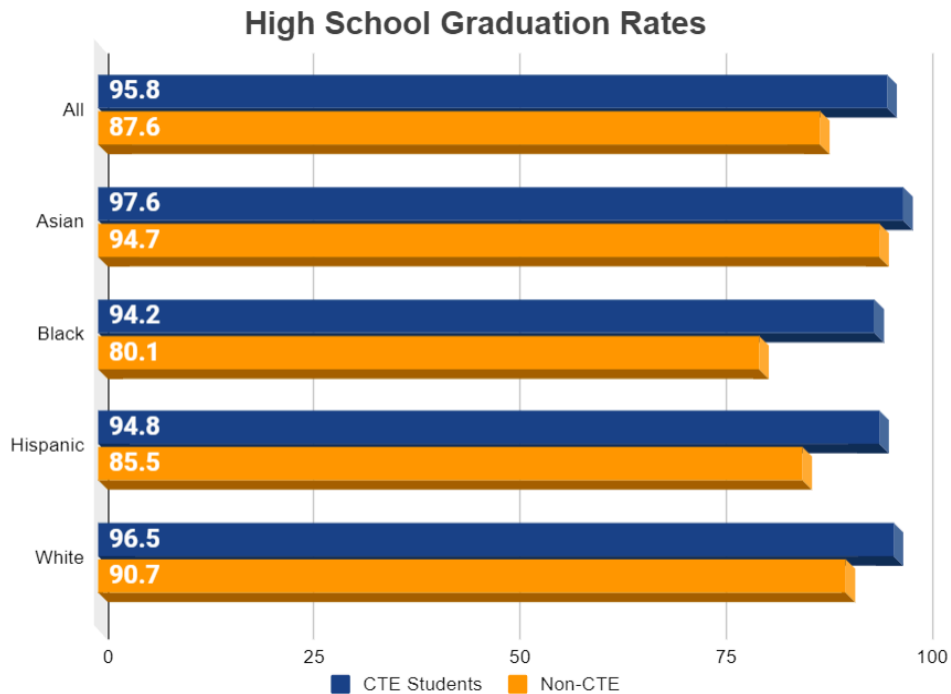
CTE pathways offer courses that equip students with the skills needed for high-demand careers and also drive economic growth by ensuring a steady supply of skilled workers to meet industry needs.

In FY'24, **278,543** students participated in the following programs:



Proof of impact. Illinois already serves students at scale, and results track with national evidence:

- CTE concentrators (students who take multiple courses in a specific career pathway) have **higher rates of employment and postsecondary enrollment in their field of study** compared to their non-CTE peers
- This same group of students exhibited a **9% to 14% higher likelihood of high school graduation**, with the highest impact being seen within the African American and Hispanic Communities



Expanding CTE Capacity to Meet Workforce Demand

Demand exceeds capacity. Illinois employers report persistent shortages in skilled roles while many high school and Area Career Center (ACC) programs operate at or near capacity. District and ACC reports indicate that roughly 1 in 10 interested students are turned away each year due to budget constraints, lack of facilities, and insufficient staffing.

“Three-quarters (75%) of Gen Z respondents say they are interested in exploring vocational schools that offer paid, on-the-job training.”

Source: Fortune, June 14, 2024

Priority high-demand pathways (examples):

- 1. Healthcare.** Nursing and allied health (LPN/CNA, medical assisting, phlebotomy, medical lab/radiologic tech); needs faculty/clinical capacity and updated simulation.
- 2. Advanced Manufacturing (Welding, CNC Machining).** There is a growing need for welders, CNC machinists/programmers, and industrial maintenance technicians to fabricate, machine, automate, and keep modern production lines running. Programs report waitlists and need upgraded labs (tooling, metrology, safety systems, and robotics/automation) to meet employer demand.
- 3. Automotive Technicians and Mechanics (including Diesel & Heavy Equipment).** There is a growing need for skilled technicians to maintain and repair increasingly complex vehicles, including electric and hybrid models, as well as diesel-powered commercial trucks and heavy equipment. Programs need updated equipment and the facilities necessary to provide these programs.
- 4. Aviation/Aerospace Maintenance & Avionics.** A&P/AMT and avionics technicians (navigation/communication systems, wiring/harnessing, troubleshooting/installation); requires

upgraded airframes, powerplant trainers, avionics benches/test equipment, and tooling to current FAA/industry specs.

“The policy challenge used to be to find a job for every worker. Now, the U.S. will struggle to find a worker for every job.”

Source: Fortune quoting economist Lant Pritchett, June 27, 2024

What’s driving the gap

- Seats and lab space are capped by outdated equipment and facility limits
- Instructor recruitment/retention challenges in high-wage technical fields
- Misalignment between available equipment and current industry technology
- Limited capacity for supervised work-based learning (CDE, internships, youth apprenticeship)

What investment will do

- Add student seats in priority pathways by upgrading labs/equipment and expanding sections
- Modernize programs to current industry standards (safety systems, tooling, software)
- Strengthen the instructor pipeline through partnerships and incentives

The Impact of Investing in CTE

Return on Investment (ROI): Expanding Opportunity, Strengthening Communities

Investing in CTE yields measurable gains for students and the economy. High-quality programs raise graduation and credential attainment, improve employment and earnings, and build a reliable local talent pipeline—**benefits that are especially powerful for rural, African American, and Hispanic students who face the steepest access barriers.**

What taxpayers get back

Independent evaluations of CTE and completion-boosting programs consistently find returns of about **\$2–\$4 for every public \$1 invested** within 5–10 years (a conservative estimate that excludes many broader social benefits).*

Direct Impact in Schools and Communities

“These local snapshots show how CTE dollars translate into seats, credentials, and paid work experiences—especially for underserved students.”

Chicago Public Schools (EFE 010) — Equity + credentials at scale

CPS opened up cross-city access through Chicago Build and the Police & Fire Academies, while modernizing electrician programs with a green-energy focus and expanding dual credit. The result was a record number of career/college credentials and students moving directly into union apprenticeships, showing how updated programs translate into equitable, high-wage opportunities.

Quote:

Des Plaines Valley Region (EFE 030) — Dual-enrollment cohorts + pre-apprenticeship

Districts pooled resources to launch college-level CNA, Criminal Justice, and Welding cohorts with tuition covered by high schools, added College and Career Pathway Endorsements, and expanded Work-Based Learning through hospital clinicals and police placements. A new Plumbers Local 130 pre-apprenticeship now gives first-gen and nontraditional students no-cost on-ramps to in-demand careers.

Quote:

Northern Kane County (EFE 110) — Rapid gains in dual credit & WBL

Exposure starts early: a districtwide expo brought 2,400 eighth-graders into direct contact with pathways and employers. By graduation, the share of CTE concentrators earning postsecondary credit climbed from 2% to ~55% (2020 → Class of 2023), WBL participation nearly doubled (4.44% → 9.56%), and 243 students completed paid internships in maintenance and manufacturing—evidence of a stronger 9–14 pipeline.

Quote:

Collinsville Area Vocational Center — Capacity expansion to meet demand

After turning students away for three straight years, the region broke ground on a \$25M expansion to grow programs from 16 → 22+ and seats from ~580 → 800+. Designed with strong employer advisory input, the project will cut waitlists and add high-demand capacity so more students can train locally for local jobs.

Quote:

How does Illinois' investment in CTE compare to other states?

To ensure comparability, this analysis uses FY'22 figures for peer states from Advance CTE's most recent standardized cross-state dataset and FY'25 figures for Illinois to reflect current investment levels, providing the most accurate like-for-like comparison available pending the next national update.

State	Fiscal Year	State Appropriation to Secondary CTE	Secondary CTE Enrollment	State \$ per Student
Indiana	FY'22	\$168,000,000	74,193	\$2,264.36
California	FY'22	\$988,500,000	636,280	\$1,553.56
Texas	FY'22	\$3,099,300,549	1,727,471	\$1,794.13
Kentucky	FY'22	\$64,782,800	138,189	\$468.80
Michigan	FY'22	\$37,611,300	84,971	\$442.64
Missouri	FY'22	\$50,069,028	122,247	\$409.57
Illinois	FY'25	\$58,000,000	278,543	\$208.23

Sources: Advance CTE (FY'22 state CTE appropriations & enrollment); Illinois FY'25 figures from state-reported appropriation and enrollment.

Even against FY'22 peer benchmarks, Illinois's current per-student investment remains well below states like Indiana, Texas, and California, and below neighboring states such as Missouri and Kentucky. If Illinois wants to remain competitive and build a resilient workforce pipeline, per-student state support needs to move closer to peer levels.

Needed Investments in CTE

Equipment Needs and Annual Costs

Updated equipment plays a vital role in Career and Technical Education (CTE) by aligning instruction with current industry standards and ensuring students develop skills that transfer directly to the workplace. It enriches learning by offering accurate, efficient, and hands-on training with advanced techniques and concepts while also improving safety through modern features that reduce accidents. Access to the latest technology increases student engagement, strengthens enrollment and retention, and prepares learners for industry-recognized certifications that boost employability. Staying current with industry advancements ensures graduates are workforce-ready, and schools with modern equipment are more likely to build strong partnerships with businesses, creating opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and job placements.



for

Equipment makes up 30% of CTE and Area Career Centers' Annual Budgets. Area Career Centers need on average \$1.0 M of equipment each year over the next five years. An additional 10% increase in CTE funding for Fiscal Year 2027 is needed to provide adequate funding for equipment.

Capital Development Needs and Methods to Meet Facility Goals

In order for our facilities to meet work force demands for the next 50 years, we must create spaces that support program growth and adapt to evolving workforce demands driven by technological advancements. This requires investing in modern infrastructure and consistently updating equipment and resources to reflect current industry standards. Facilities should be built with flexibility, enabling the integration of new technologies and instructional approaches. By fostering an adaptive learning environment, we can keep our programs relevant and ensure students are prepared for the changing workforce. Such an approach will strengthen our competitive advantage and contribute to future economic growth and innovation. ***Area Career Centers have reported their facilities need an average of \$10,000,000 to modernize their facilities with requests ranging from \$500,000 to over \$25,000,000.***



CTE Personnel

To deliver high-quality CTE statewide—especially in hard-to-staff fields—districts and ACCs need targeted staffing investments in the roles below.

- **CTE teachers (industry-experienced):** support alternative licensure, salary differentials/stipends for in-demand credentials, and **summer externships** to keep skills current.
- **CTE counselors:** guide pathway plans, dual credit, and credential stacking; specialize in 9–14 transitions.
- **WBL coordinators:** broker internships/CDE/youth apprenticeship.

Investment Request

- **Increase the CTEI line by 10% in FY'27** to stabilize per-student rates, expand sections, and maintain the equipment replacement cycle.

- **Establish a \$25M annual competitive capital/equipment program** for CTE labs (districts and ACCs), prioritizing shovel-ready projects, equity (including rural), and employer-verified equipment lists.

Sources:

- Illinois School Report Card
- Illinois Future of Work Task Force Report
- ISBE 2024 Career and Technical Education Annual Report
- Association for Career and Technical Education
- Department of Education
- Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE)
- Department of Labor