



# Grow Your Workforce Through Educator Engagement

Your future workforce could be closer than you realize. Finding them starts with building connections and growing relationships with your local school district. Did you know that most South Dakota school systems have career and technical education (CTE) programs? These programs are your workforce incubators.

## What is CTE?

Career and technical education equips middle and high school students with the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for careers in today's workforce. CTE courses are organized into a wide variety of career areas. Course sequences build from exploratory classes to advanced technical skills and hands-on work-based learning opportunities (this is where you come in!).

## How can I get involved?

Your business or organization can help make classroom learning come to life. Contact your local school district or the regional [CTE specialist](#) for your area, to find out how you can help shape the state's workforce and maybe even meet future employees.

## Why should I get involved?

"When will I ever use this?" Students have asked this question forever. You probably asked it yourself. Now you're uniquely positioned to answer. Your experience can help students understand how they could apply their learning in a future career. Engaging with students and educators in your local CTE programs better prepares students to fulfill the needs of today's economy. By collaborating with local CTE programs, business and industry partners can provide the next generation of their own workforce with real-life experience before they arrive on the job. Business and industry involvement in CTE programs positively impacts your business, your industry, the economy, and education.

## CTE equips students with the top five skills employers want

- 1. Flexible/Adaptable**
- 2. Lifelong learner/  
motivated to grow**
- 3. Job-specific skills (hard skills)**
- 4. Soft Skills**
- 5. Passionate about industry**

Source: [Shifting the Skills Conversation Report from Advance CTE October 2021](#)

## What can I do?

We know you're busy. Whatever your time and resources allow, there's an activity to match. Check out these great options.

### Guest Speaking:

Guest presentations to classes from business and industry experts can illustrate connections between CTE coursework and real-life careers.

### Competition Judging:

[Career and technical student organization](#) (CTSO) competitions allow students to demonstrate skills in the career fields they're interested in. South Dakota CTSOs include DECA (marketing, finance, hospitality, and management); Educators Rising; Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA); Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA); FFA (agricultural careers); HOSA (health science professions); and SkillsUSA (skilled professions). Business and industry professionals are welcome volunteers during these groups' competitive events. Your expertise ensures students are judged on relevant workforce standards. Additionally, many districts appreciate business and industry community partners who help evaluate student capstone experiences, which can include portfolios, presentations, and research papers related to a specific career area.

### Donations:

As you upgrade equipment and supplies, old items could get new life in a classroom. Gently used or unneeded industry-grade resources may be just what your local district needs to ensure students have access to appropriate tools, consumable supplies, and equipment to prepare them for the career fields they hope to enter.

### Advising:

You have priceless insight into your community's workforce needs. School districts regularly review and develop their CTE programs to ensure they remain up-to-date. You could contribute to this work by serving on a formal advisory committee or by providing informal feedback to a CTE teacher. By making yourself available in an advising capacity, you can provide guidance on high-demand workforce needs; CTE program revisions, additions, or other changes, based on workforce trends; and the latest industry standards, equipment, or certification options.

### Other opportunities:

You can also mentor or advise students; participate in a "career day" event; invite teachers into your workplace; provide job shadow opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships; or host field trips to your business.

# 83%

**of employers agree that hiring employees with CTE experience would improve their business's bottom line.**