



A New Vision of Readiness

Strategic Plan 2023-2027



WE ARE INNOVATING

the education-to-career experience to strengthen student success.

WE ENVISION

Sonoma County students having rewarding careers that strengthen their lives, our community and the workforce.

CORE VALUES

We seek to build student agency through:

- **EQUITY:** Students have equitable access to opportunities through individualized support and multiple education-to-career pathways.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** Students participate in relevant learning that builds confidence and informs decision-making for their future.
- **ENGAGEMENT:** Students envision their future through educational experiences that generate excitement for learning.
- **ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET:** Students imagine the possibilities and are inspired to take risks to realize their potential.

Our Pledge to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

CTE Foundation is grounded in our vision that all students have rewarding careers that strengthen their lives, our community and the economy. We believe this is only realized by ensuring equitable access to education and career pathways regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic background or ability.

We acknowledge the difficult truth underlying the systemic racism that contributes to inequities impacting a young person’s ability to realize their full potential.

Therefore, we pledge to work to dismantle racism in our own organization through our hiring, promotion and retention practices; our board governance, representation and policies; and in our community through our grant-making, program development, student and teacher engagement and community partnerships.

We unite educators, employers and donors to build programs that prepare students for the future in the ways that excite them the most.



Since 2012, CTE Foundation has provided career-connected learning to over 26,000 local students, cultivating an education experience that connects today’s learning with tomorrow’s opportunity. And, most importantly, an education experience that will lead them toward the high-skill, high-demand and high-wage careers that are driving our local economy.

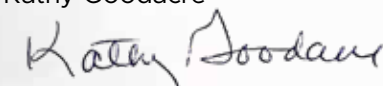
Despite a decade of effort, Sonoma County students continue to show low levels of readiness for college or career, compared to their peers across the state. Young people today feel disconnected, unprepared and anxious for their future. Many educators strive to inspire a passion for learning but find it difficult to engage their classroom. Many students want to engage, but struggle because school feels detached from their interests. CTE Foundation is leading the charge to transform Sonoma County’s education system into an engine for student empowerment and economic growth.

Our North Star is that all Sonoma County students have access to an education experience that is grounded in relevant career-connected learning to more equitably, holistically and purposefully prepare them for future success in college, career and life.

Over the next four years, we will double down on our efforts to advance high-quality career pathways aligned to regional workforce needs. We will double our investments in direct services and work-based learning, and we will develop impactful connections with local employers to bring more career-connected learning to more students. We will connect schools, colleges and businesses to give students more opportunities to gain real-world experiences, and early college credits that match their interests and goals.

CTE isn’t just for “those kids” who aren’t on a college track — it’s about giving every student the tools they need to build a brighter future for themselves and their community while truly being engaged in what they’re being taught.

Let’s create a new vision of readiness, and redefine what being prepared out of high school means, and normalize the idea that there are multiple pathways for students to successfully transition from high school to career.

Kathy Goodacre

Chief Executive Officer





Why Now?

There are few things more important to the high school experience than preparing for life after graduation.

Traditionally, college readiness was the benchmark for success. However, **in Sonoma County just over 40% of students enroll in any college after graduation, and less than one third say they actually feel prepared for their future**, leaving many young people wondering what their future holds after high school.

Our vision of success goes beyond college eligibility. There is growing demand for careers that lead to family-sustaining wages. Many Sonoma County students must work while they pursue additional education to obtain the necessary skills and training to be able to live here.

Today's students have faced crises that disrupted their education during critical years. Wildfires, floods and a global pandemic have caused learning loss and contributed to a growing mental health crisis, exposing inequities in teaching, learning and students' overall well-being. According to *YouthTruth*, Sonoma County students report feeling unprepared for life after high school and named "anxiety for their future" as the top obstacle to learning.

Local employers in major industries struggle to fill high-demand, well-paying jobs due to a shortage of skilled applicants. As the county's population ages and young residents leave due to high living costs and limited opportunities, this workforce gap threatens the region's economic future.

Success and readiness mean that students build real-world skills, have access to early college credit, are engaged in their learning and have the opportunity for career exploration while in high school. These ingredients empower students to make informed choices beyond the classroom and shape their futures, from college and career to life.

Sonoma County students ranked in the **lowest quartile** in California for engagement and college and career readiness, with African American and Latino students ranking their perception of readiness even lower than their White peers.

*2024 YouthTruth Survey

Why Career Technical Education?

Connecting students to find their way.

Career technical education offers a lifeline for today's students. This connected learning approach equips students with the skills, confidence and sense of purpose they desperately need. Career technical education ensures local youth have a greater chance of seeing the connections between academics and the workplace, builds technical and soft skills and creates informed education-to-career plans. CTE Foundation is the leading local organization exposing students to in-demand career opportunities that will lead to family-sustaining wages, allowing them to remain in our community.

CTE students feel more prepared for college and career compared to other students

Students involved in career-connected learning report **a stronger sense of readiness, feel more connected to their school community and rate their mental health more positively.**

*2024 YouthTruth Survey



More Engagement Now. More Readiness for the Future.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 Transform the Educational Experience

Today's education model doesn't give every student the same chance to get on a successful path toward a rewarding future. Sonoma County students want to engage in school but struggle because they feel what's happening in the classroom is disconnected from their interests and futures. And they don't feel ready for what comes next after high school. Classroom learning needs more relevancy and meaning for students to connect to the outside world. We support schools so they can align academics, career opportunities and student ambition.

To achieve this, we will:

- Deliver broader, more equitable access to career-connected learning opportunities and real-world experiences like internships, by building a cohesive county-wide framework.
- Connect more students to a rewarding future through the expansion and support for high school career pathways aligned to local economic and workforce drivers.
- Invest more deeply in school systems through financial and human capital to reimagine and support an education experience that best prepares all students for life beyond high school.

2 Frame a Vision of Readiness

Career technical education is too often seen as an alternative path. Yet it is a proven model to better prepare all young people for high-demand, high-wage careers. To ensure student success, we need to engage the community to build demand for high-quality integrated pathways as the best way to successfully transition students from high school to career.

To achieve this, we will:

- Advocate for career-connected learning as an equitable pathway to a successful future.
- Be the leading voice in the community for career-connected learning.
- Elevate diverse student voices to inform and communicate our vision of readiness.

3 Grow a More Equitable and Effective Organization

Organizations that understand the value that diversity, equity and inclusion are healthier, and boast a thriving culture for all staff, board and volunteers. Supporting individuals' well-being and professional development fosters both individual and organizational resilience, and increases open-mindedness, acceptance and innovation.

To achieve this, we will:

- Work towards fostering a deeper understanding of racism and equity, particularly in the system of education. By monitoring and implementing shifts in our policies, procedures and practices, we can create an environment where everyone feels valued, and we enhance individual and organizational well-being.
- Optimize administrative systems, to ensure a healthy board culture, and strengthen individual staff competencies, professional development and growth.

4 Grow Financial Support and Deepen Donor Relationships

Too often, organizations are singularly focused on raising the most money for their own mission. We believe in collective action and the need to partner with donors, schools, businesses and other community organizations to provide students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in life. We seek to advance from a transactional fundraising model to one that builds upon and values our long-term, trust-based relationships to make a lasting impact.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop and strengthen collaboration among board, staff and volunteers to build a Culture of Philanthropy that is inspired by the impact we can have on improving educational outcomes for all students.
- Broaden and deepen relationships with individual donors, foundations, community organizations and corporate funders who match our commitment to equity and innovation in education.
- Leverage all sources of funding including private, state, local and federal funding to ensure the greatest number of resources are invested in career-connected learning strategies in Sonoma County.

Commitment to School Transformation

We are deepening our commitment to transform entire schools ensuring thousands of students have access to educational pathways that are aligned to the high-skill, high-demand and high-wage careers in our region. Together with our schools and workforce partners we are creating an equity-driven education model that broadens access to the following:

- High-quality work-based learning and paid internships for all students.
- Access to early college credits aligned to students' career pathway and interests, earning as many as 12 college units by graduation.
- Individualized student advising and supports.

The result? The emergence of engaging, integrated learning experiences that provide a pathway to prepare all our students, regardless of background, for a lifetime of success.



“We know that students engage more deeply in school when they feel what they are learning in the classroom connects to life after high school. That’s why CTE Foundation’s commitment to elevating the importance of career-connected learning is a game-changer for our students.

– Dr. Amie Carter, Superintendent of Sonoma County Schools

More Than a Foundation

Our unique role in Sonoma County.

We are committed to understanding the specific education and workforce needs of Sonoma County, and we actively engage with school and community partners, funders and policymakers to address these challenges. CTE Foundation is a steadfast leader in Sonoma County advocating for and supporting innovative education-to-career programs. Our persistent presence helps drive long-term sustainability, and we hold our education and workforce partners accountable for delivering results. By pooling resources and expertise, we amplify the impact of education and workforce development initiatives, ultimately benefiting the entire community.

We are reimagining the high school education experience by bringing together education, industry and policy leaders to shape pathways to high-skill, high-demand and high-wage careers - right here in Sonoma County. This unique role enables us to leverage different funding streams – local, state and federal – ultimately maximizing financial support to drive innovation and foster collaboration within schools. As a leader within this transformation, we advocate for a new vision of readiness, connecting students to career pathways that shape the future workforce and prepare them for lifelong success in Sonoma County.



OUR IMPACT

\$4.6M+
in grants directly to schools

\$18M
raised to support career-connected learning

145+
CTE courses we've invested in, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, engineering, healthcare and hospitality offered among 15 public high schools

26,000+
students directly impacted since 2012

250+
middle school students engaged in hands-on STEM education

300+
workforce partners engaged over time

How We Will Succeed

Trusted Relationships

Our history of delivering impactful career technical education programs across Sonoma County is dependent on the development of deep, trusting relationships with our school, employer, workforce and funding partners. Through this process we have gained a better understanding of the gaps and opportunities that exist to provide equitable opportunities for all our students, while supporting a thriving economy.

Shifting the Narrative

CTE Foundation is uniting community partners to advocate for and champion career-connected learning as a vital, equitable pathway to success. We challenge the stigma that career technical education is only for non-college bound students, and we elevate diverse student voices, to promote a new vision of readiness where students proudly share their academic and life outcomes as a result of their varied education-to-career pathways.

A Shared Vision

Our role in providing intermediary leadership is critical to cultivating partnerships and holding a regional vision and plan for sustainability.

For far too long, local schools have held tight to their fierce independence, creating siloed approaches that can hinder progress and lead to inequitable opportunity and access for too many students.

With access and equity at the center, we are leading the way in mobilizing organizations and resources that together can deliver greater impact for our students and community.

Like stars combining their light, effective collaboration across districts and institutions will amplify our impact. Together, we can harness the tremendous potential of our community and accomplish more than any single organization can on its own. Together, we will light the way for a brighter future for Sonoma County students.

“Our students and communities are challenged to meet the needs of an increasingly complex world and future. I’m proud to be part of a collaborative effort led by CTE Foundation across the county and region to inspire our systems to create new models of career-connected learning for our students. This collective North Star is defined by a vision of integrated instruction around specific industry pathways, high-quality work-based learning, early college credit, industry certifications and more - propelling our students into successful careers, rooted in local labor needs and evolving technologies.”

– Dan Ostermann,
College and Career
Pathways Coordinator,
Petaluma City Schools

We acknowledge that we cannot achieve our vision for Sonoma County students without the continued engagement and collaboration of the following organizations and institutions:

- K-12 School Districts (middle and high schools)
- Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE)
- Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC)
- Sonoma State University (SSU)
- Economic Development Collaborative
- Workforce Investment Board
- 10,000 Degrees
- Internship Coalition Partners
- Peter E. Haas Jr. Family Fund
- Harbor Freight Tools for Schools
- Sonoma Clean Power
- Sonoma Corps Employer Partners
- County of Sonoma
- Accelerate Ed National Network (Funded by The Gates Foundation)
- North Coast Builders Exchange (NCBE)
- Local Education Foundations

10 Years Supporting Sonoma County Students

A decade of CTE Foundation's transformative impact on education, and the milestones that drove student success and reshaped learning in Sonoma County.

2023

Development of a new Strategic Plan focused on transforming the education experience for all students

2020

Launch of the New School Model incentive to transform three high schools

Key partners: Santa Rosa City Schools, West Sonoma County Union High School District, Petaluma City Schools, SCOE and Peter E. Haas Jr. Family Fund

2019

Launch of Sonoma Corps to address workforce shortages and improve student career readiness

Key Partners/Early Adopters: Costeaux French Bakery, GALLO, Keysight Technologies, SMART Train, SCOE, SRJC, 10,000 Degrees, SSU

2018

Launch of the Girls Tinker Academy to increase diversity in STEM fields

Key Partners: SSU, SCOE, Keysight Technologies

2017

Launch of the North Bay Construction Corps to address workforce shortages in construction trades

Key Partners: NCBE, SRJC, SCOE

2015

Expansion of investments to include work-based learning partnerships, such as the Switch Electric Vehicle program

Key partners: SCOE, Sonoma Clean Power, Switch Vehicles

2014

Incorporation of the Career Technical Education Foundation of Sonoma County as a 501(c)(3) non-profit

2013

CTE Fund awards \$500,000 to five new engineering programs in local high schools

2012

Sonoma County Leaders launch the CTE Fund at Community Foundation Sonoma County

Key partners: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, The John Jordan Foundation



CAREER TECHNICAL
EDUCATION
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