

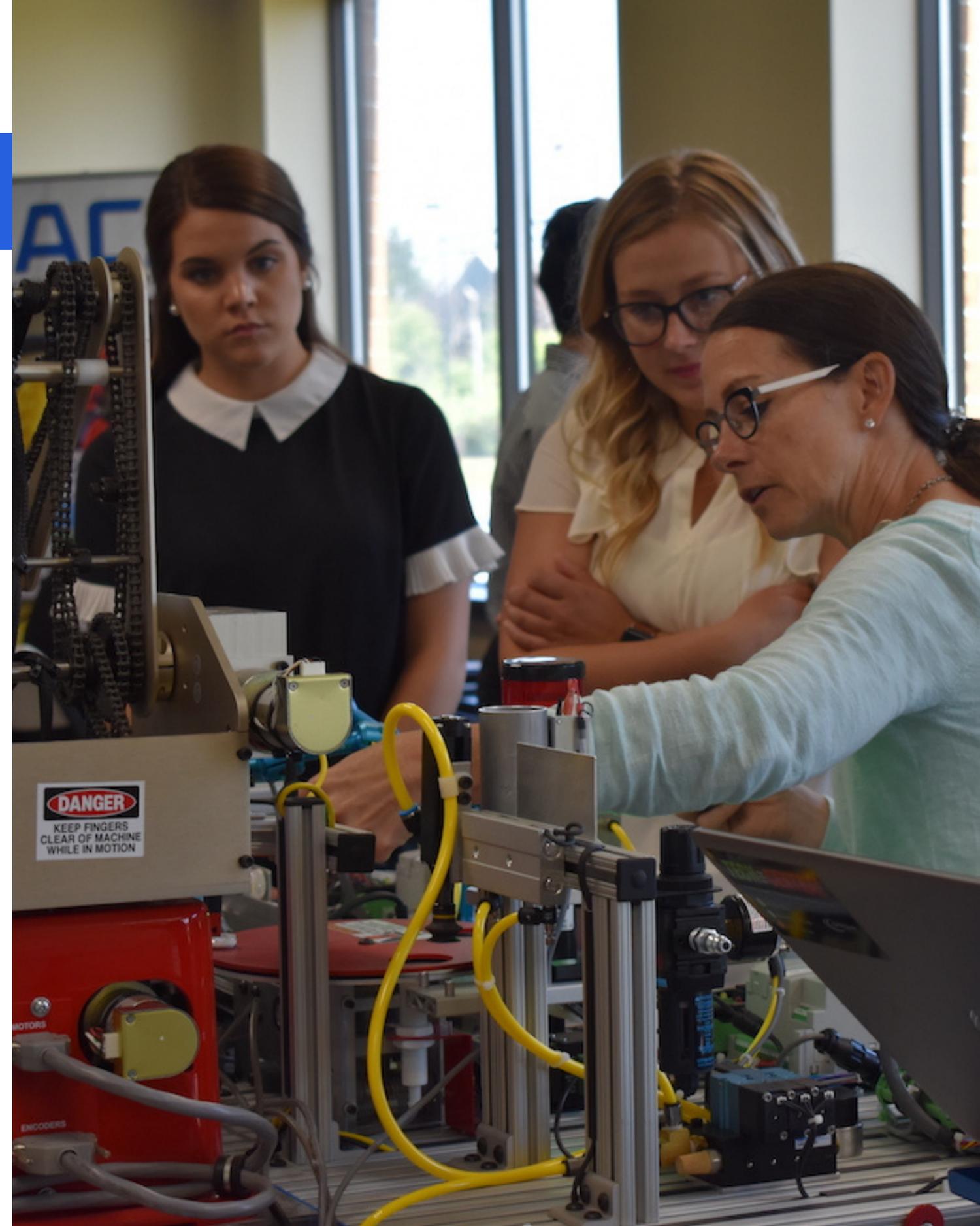
The Ultimate Guide to **ESSER** **Funds**

For Career & Technical
Education



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ESSER FUNDS OVERVIEW

Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief funds

The ESSER fund program was deployed by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds are designed to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our students, including investing in new learning technology that will benefit students in the long-term.

This guide will focus on ESSER funds as they relate to Career and Technical Education specifically. Of course we believe these funds should be used for the most pressing, important needs of a district, no matter what that might be. Our goal is to provide general information as well as the tools to help educators advocate for CTE when it's time for discussions around use of the funds.



There have been 3 rounds of ESSER funds since 2020. Each round was part of the series of economic stimulus bills passed by Congress in efforts to speed up economic recovery.

ESSER I

2020 CARES Act

Preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19

ESSER II

2021 CRRSA Act

Same guidelines as CARES Act but with additional LEA allowable uses

ESSER III

2021 ARP Act

20% required to address learning loss; the remaining 80% may be used for a wide range of activities (more on this in coming pages)

ESSER III IN DETAIL

We will spend more time going through ESSER III funds in the following pages. These funds are the most recent, most flexible, and by far have the most amount of money allocated to districts.



How does my district get a hold of ESSER funds?

The federal government allocated funds to each state, who then must submit a a statewide plan for the spending of those funds that must get approved before the plan can be implemented.

As a baseline, 90% of the ESSER III funds a state receives must go to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). For the most part, an LEA is synonymous with a school district.

The amount your district receives will vary district-by-district, state-by-state.

Check with your state's department of education to find the amount allocated to each district.





Where can I find information about my state's plan?

Each state will have a different statewide ESSER plan, along with their own timeline and resources for districts. These details will be published through your state's Department of Education or Department of Public Instruction. Here are 5 steps to help guide you to the information you need:

- 1** Go to the [Federal Office of Elementary and Secondary Education website](#) and find your ARP ESSER State Plan & Status
- 2** Select your state specific link to the LEA Plan and you'll be redirected to your state's DoE or DPI ESSER landing page
- 3** From here, you'll be able to find the master list of ESSER fund allocations by school district
- 4** Compare the federal ESSER III guidelines with your state's approved ESSER plan
- 5** Find your state's ESSER III application process and requirements to access funds



How can my district spend ESSER III funds?

At least 20% of total ESSER III funds your district receives must go toward addressing learning loss experienced during the coronavirus pandemic through programs like:

- After-school clubs and activities
- Summer enrichment programs and camps
- Extended year programs





How can my district spend ESSER III funds?

To standardize allowable uses and make it easier for districts to develop plans, the legislation calls out well-known and long-established bills that educators are used to working under. So for ESSER III, **the remaining 80%** can go toward any activities that are already authorized under...*

- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

- **The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006**



We called out Perkins V because this is the most relevant to Career and Technical Education programs. As a CTE educator, you're probably already very familiar with what activities are authorized under Perkins.

For more information, visit the site: <https://cte.ed.gov/legislation/perkins-v>

*There are 13 additional allowable uses for ESSER III funds. See Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act for the full list.

SO...

I can use ESSER funds for my Career and Technical Education Program?

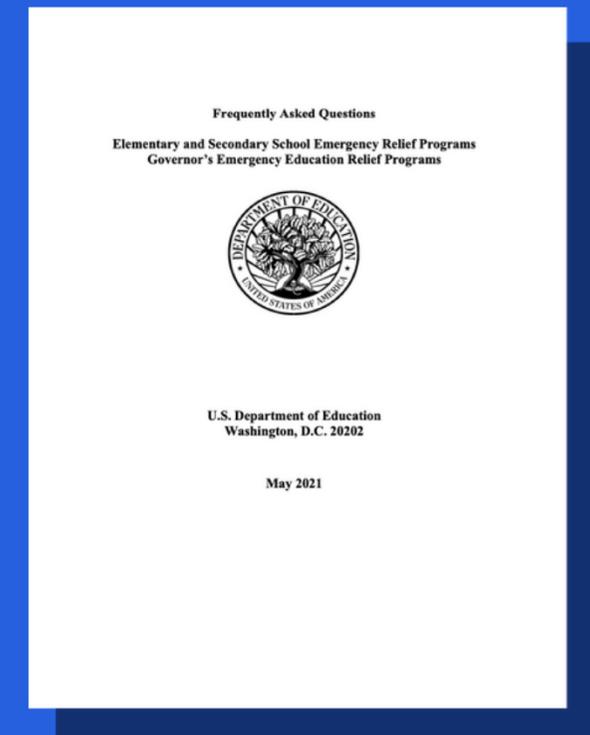


YES! As we mentioned, districts may use ESSER funds for any activity authorized by Perkins V, in addition to numerous other classifications that pertain to CTE.

Note: Although the lists of allowable uses of funds between each ESSER round are not totally identical, they all include the following allowance:

"Any activity authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)."*

By the way, there's a great FAQ document that answers this and many common questions about ESSER funds. Click the link at the bottom of this page to read more.



[*Source: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs FAQ](#)

ADVOCATING FOR CTE

If you're a Superintendent, Principal, Business or Finance Manager, we want you to understand the value of investing in your CTE program and the ROI it offers not just to your school, but to the entire community.

If you're a CTE Coordinator or Instructor, we want to give you the tools and ideas to advocate for your program with your district's leadership.

Making the case for CTE programs

As a reminder, ESSER funds were designed to help districts recover from the pandemic and to create a barrier against any disruption of that scale in the future.

The following page lists our top 2 reasons why CTE is a great place to invest funds.



TOP 2 REASONS CTE IS A GREAT ESSER INVESTMENT

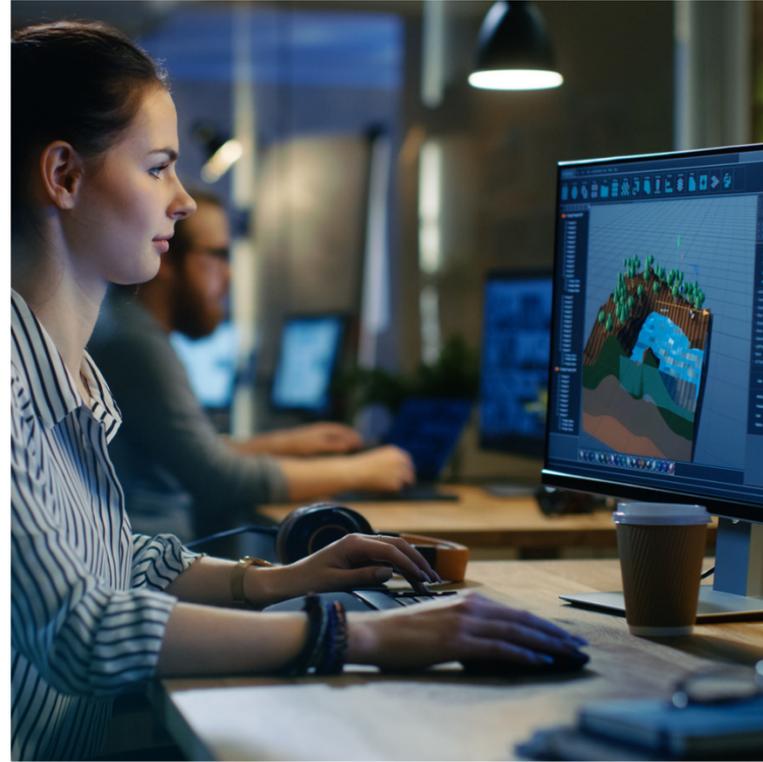
1

First, Career and Technical Education programs were massively impacted by COVID. Most of your courses rely on students being in the lab and interacting with hands-on equipment. When schools went virtual, CTE's core curriculum delivery method was more disrupted than perhaps any other subject area.

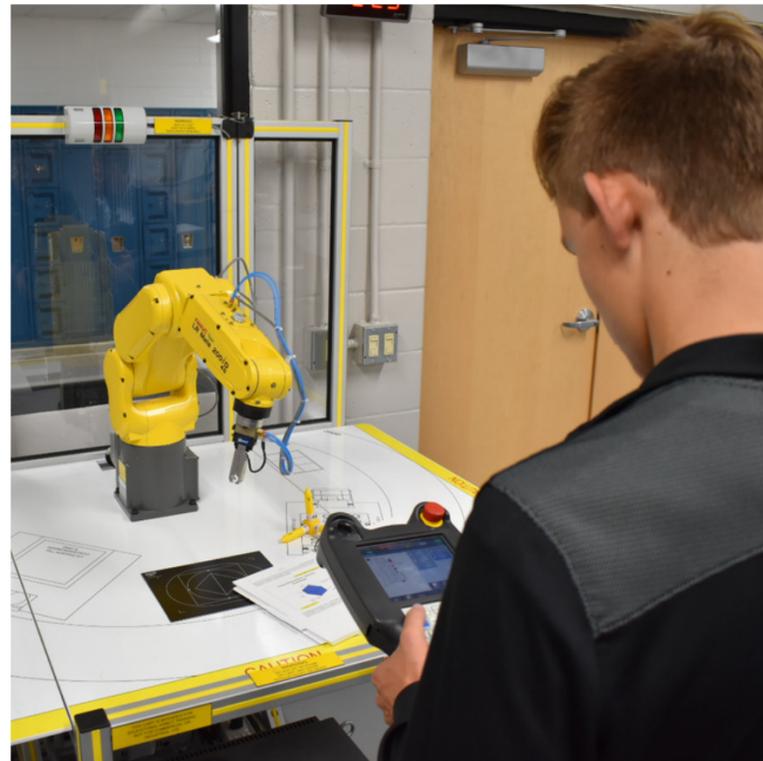
2

Second, CTE programs are, by nature, set up to help our entire workforce and economy recover from the pandemic. The careers our CTE students are preparing for are the same jobs that were considered essential during the toughest months. Those same jobs are still in high demand today, and CTE programs will produce the pipeline of skilled individuals our economy needs to continue to recover.

Hopefully we've convinced you that your CTE program is a great place to invest ESSER funds! In the next section, we're sharing 5 ideas for using ESSER funds in your CTE program that align to the mission and allowable uses.



5 IDEAS FOR USING ESSER FUNDS IN YOUR CTE PROGRAM



1 Start summer camps & after-school clubs

If you recall, 20% of the funds you receive must go toward addressing learning loss through programs like after-school clubs and activities, summer enrichment programs, and extended year programs.

Your career and technical education students probably have some catching up to do in terms of practicing hands-on skills that they missed for nearly a year or more. Starting clubs for the summer or after school will give them the extra time to develop these skills.

These larger periods of time dedicated to designing, building, programming, tearing apart and putting back together are essential for long-term skill retention.

Plus, STEM and CTE subjects make for the best camps and clubs! If you start a club or camp outside normal school hours, you'll be able to draw students who may not have enrolled in a CTE class otherwise. It may even start them on an exciting new career path!





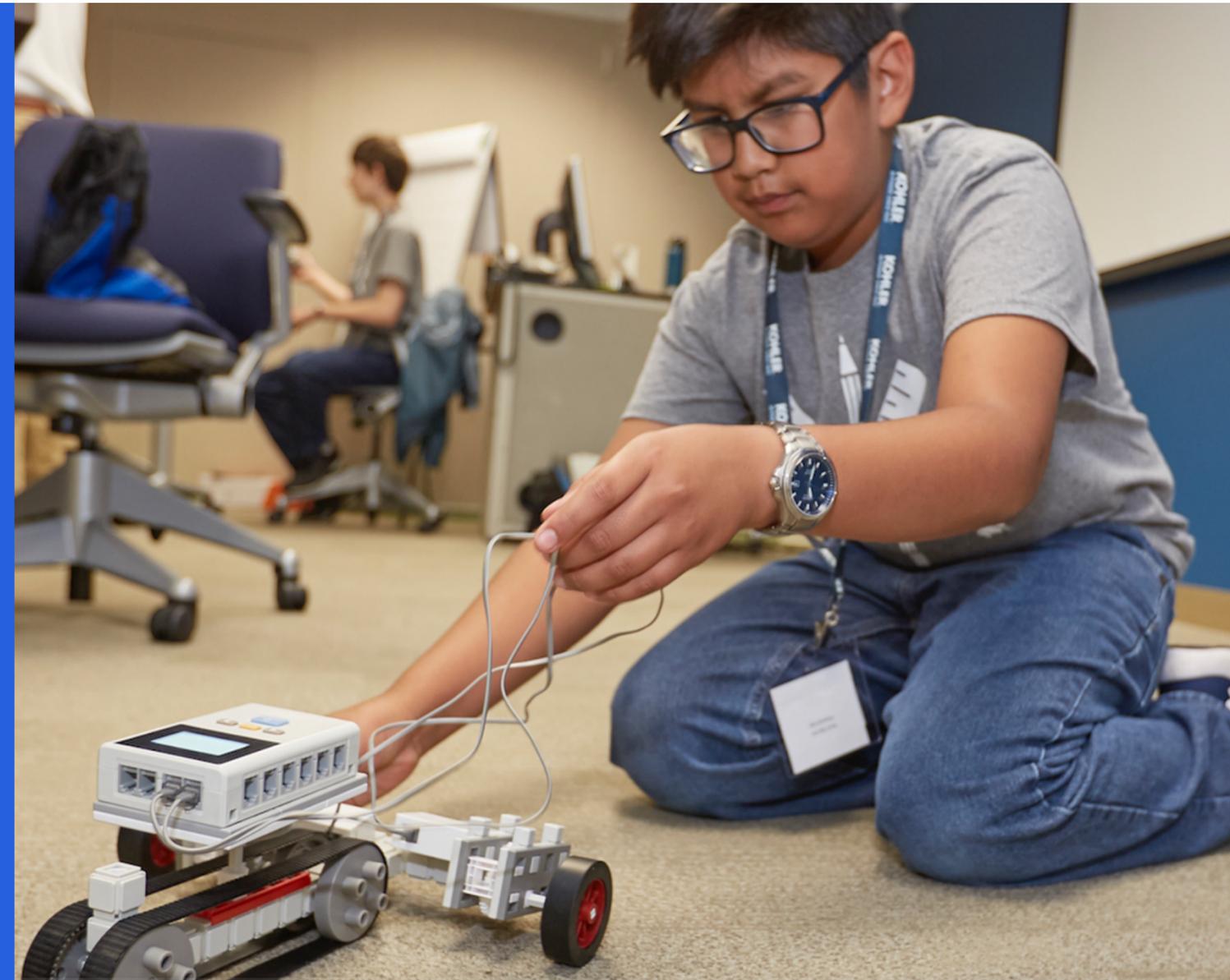
Ideas: summer camps & after-school clubs

Here are some ideas for camps & clubs to get you started:

Robotics - Join national programs like FIRST Robotics, or make your own camps where students can design, build and program their own robots, drones and AGVs.

eSports - eSports are a widely popular and growing activity that students LOVE! You can start a team or club at your school and incorporate academic learning along the way.

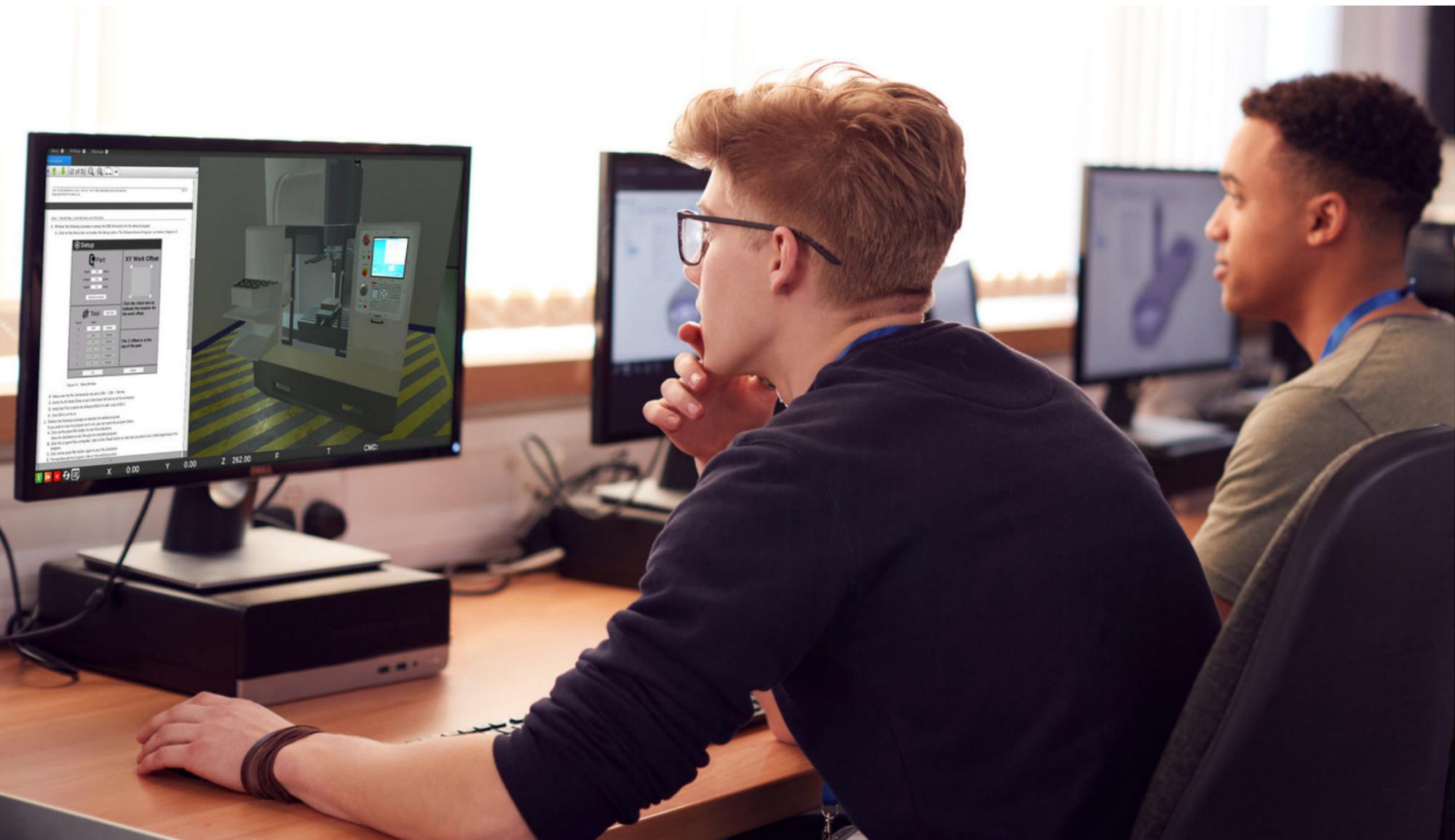
STEM Camps - Host week-long summer STEM camps. As one idea, each day you could introduce a new STEM theme like engineering, computer science, healthcare, or IIoT and then have a project aligned with it.



2

Invest in eLearning district-wide

When the pandemic hit in Spring of 2020, many districts found themselves lacking the technology and experience to go virtual. ESSER funds helped schools purchase the classroom technology, broadband, and software subscriptions they needed. And over these two years, we've all learned a great deal about digital technology and remote learning.



In 2020, eLearning was a vital asset when schools went virtual. In 2022 and beyond, eLearning is and will continue to be a core tool for K-12 classrooms.

The digital world is one your students have always known, and it is here to stay.

Just remember: eLearning is not meant to replace the great work you do. It's meant to enable your courses to be more flexible, individualized, and give you the extra bandwidth to focus on your students.



Why is eLearning a great investment for ESSER funds?

If we focus again on the purpose of ESSER funds, we'll see why a district-wide eLearning license is a great investment.

- ✓ A district license means many instructors can use the same platform (during many different classes, as part of after-school programs, or even in summer camps and clubs) - it's a great investment for the district!
- ✓ Students can access their coursework anywhere, anytime.
- ✓ Course assignments can be individualized to each student - great for addressing learning loss for any students who need to catch up.
- ✓ It enables flexible, rotational learning - some students work on eLearning, others practice hands-on skills on equipment. Less students on equipment = safer, more spaced out labs.
- ✓ SCORM compliant eLearning allows students to access their assignments from one location they're already familiar with...and makes it easier on the instructors, too!



3

Update your labs with clean, high-tech training systems

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to upgrade your labs with equipment that is industry-grade, safe and clean, and teaches high-tech skills for the modern workforce.

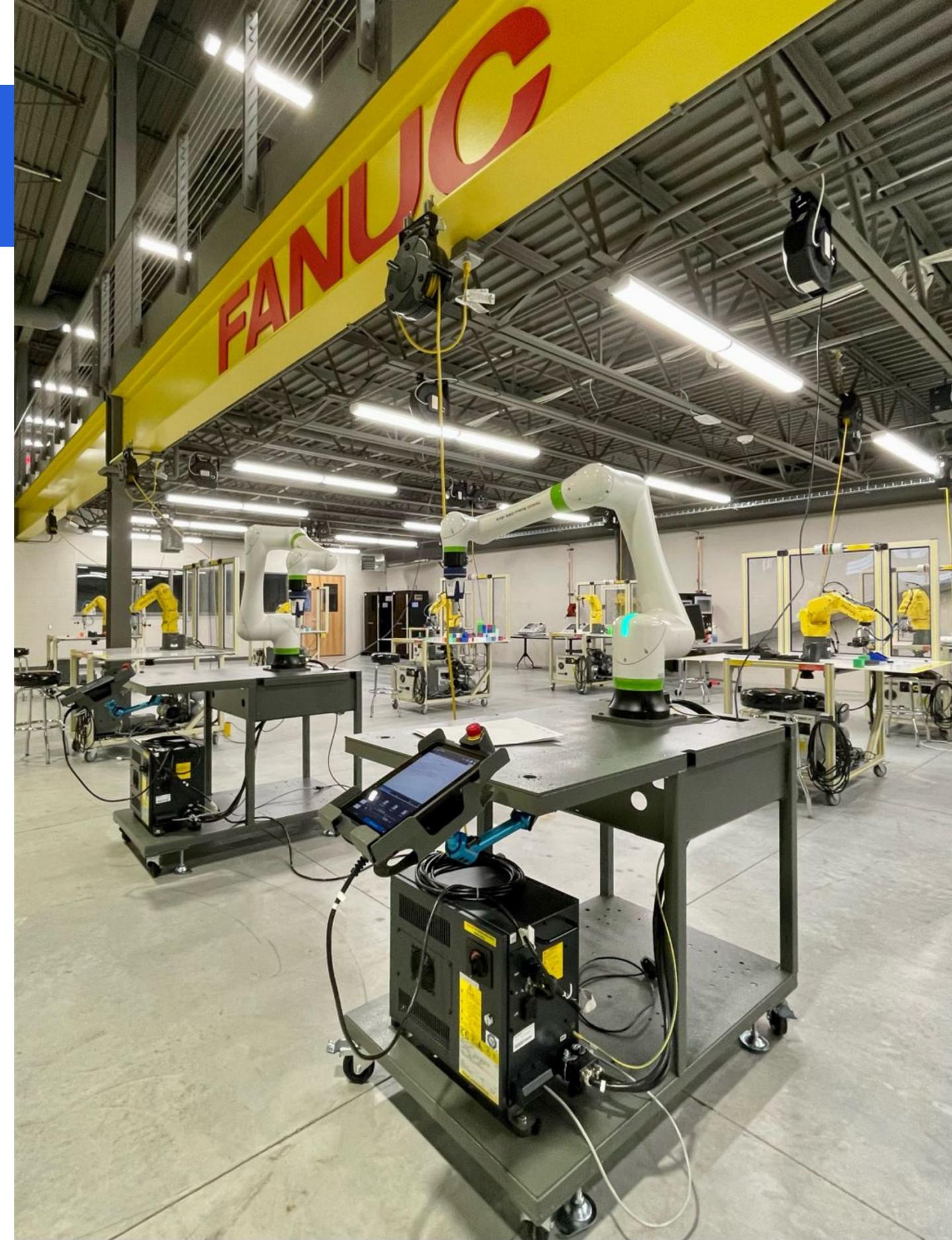
Let's start with why.

The skilled workforce shortage has been a problem for industrial employers for years. The resurgence of career and technical education programs has been a great start in addressing this issue.

But with Industry 4.0 and the acceleration of technology, it's been difficult for education to keep pace with the rate of change in the workforce.

When the pandemic hit, essential sectors like manufacturing had to maintain or even increase their output, now with even less available workers. This actually accelerated the adoption of automation in industry.

Now, more than ever, districts must upgrade their labs with advanced automation and industry-grade equipment to create a pathway from education to the modern workforce.





Ideas: Hands-on Training Equipment for CTE

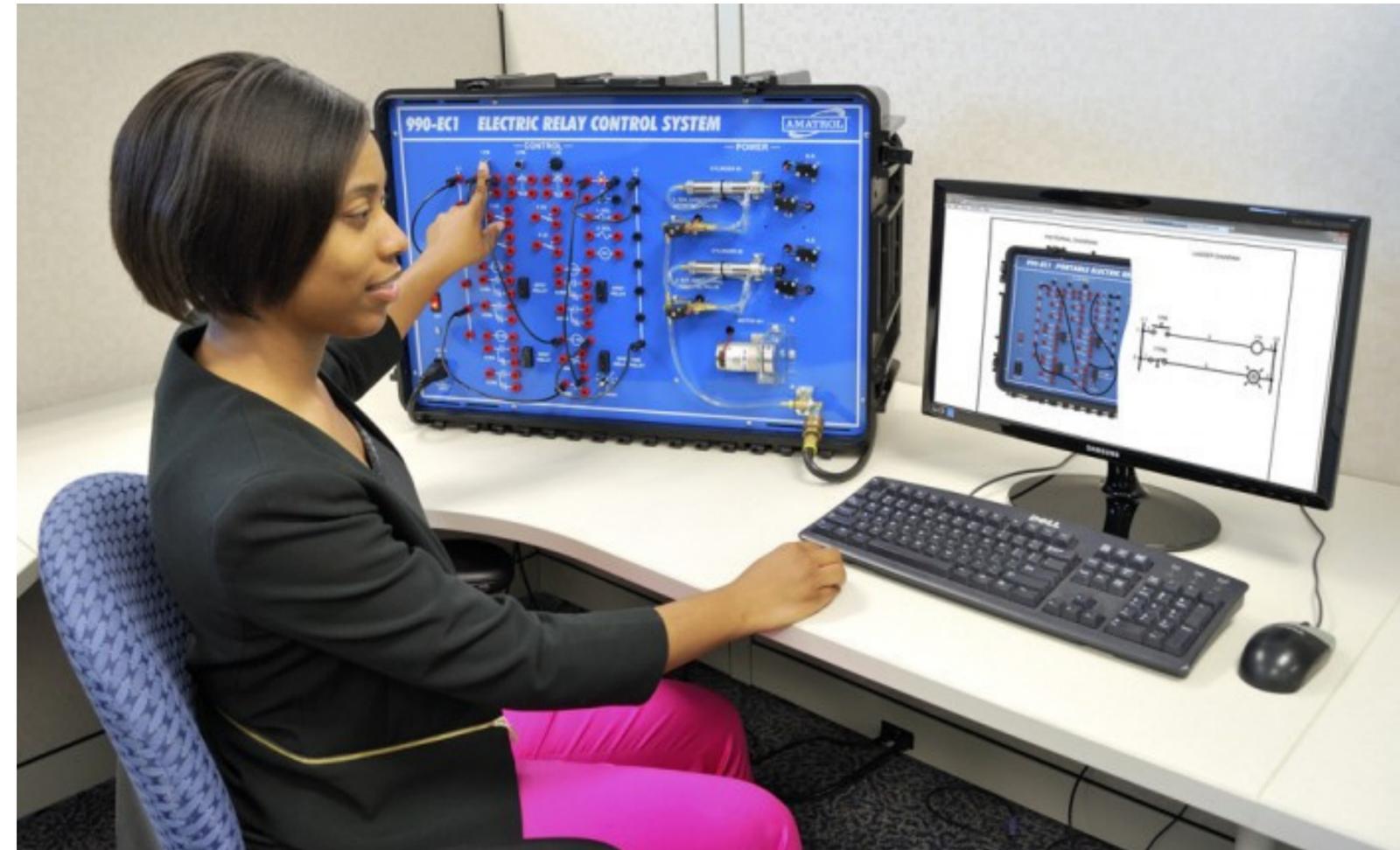
Here are some tips as you explore options for new lab equipment. These ideas can apply to any CTE course you're looking to upgrade, whether industrial technology, robotics, automotive, welding, machine tool, engineering, agriculture, construction, health, and more.

Replace outdated equipment - Evaluate the equipment in your current tech ed space. Is it outdated? Is it relevant anymore? Is this something your students will see in the workforce? It may be time to make some upgrades. Example: does your machine tool lab have CNC-controlled machines or only manual machines? It's time to upgrade.

Add Industry 4.0 technology - While your students will always need basic industrial skills, a CTE lab in 2022 should include Industry 4.0 technologies that will prepare them to work in today's smart factories: mechatronics, industrial controls, smart sensors, data analytics tools, IIoT technology, etc.

Use the same brands your local employers use - Employers love when students have learned on the same brands they use in their facilities. Visit employers; get their input: What kind of industrial robots do you use? What kind of CNC controls do your machines have? What welding brand do you prefer? What kind of PLCs are you using? Then outfit your labs with the same equipment.

Add portables - Portables are a great option for K-12 districts because of the size, price-point, and footprint. With portables, you can have multiple sets so smaller groups of students can do hands-on activities at the same time. They're easy to move to different classrooms or set up in a pod rotation to maximize the amount of time students have in the lab.



4

Start/support initiatives that address workforce needs

ESSER funds have the potential to generate widespread benefits to your community, if leveraged correctly.

How have you engaged your community in discussions around ESSER funds?

Surveys, town hall meetings and even site visits will enable those in your community to share their point of view. By listening to these voices, you will be able to align your efforts with the needs of the local workforce.

Before you develop your plan, make sure you get input from:

- Local companies who employ skilled and technical workers (get a variety of insights from small, mid-sized and large businesses)
- Post-secondary partners
- Parents and families
- Workforce boards and other public entities that participate in labor efforts
- School board members





Ideas: Initiatives that can address workforce needs

Here are some ways K-12 districts can meet the needs of the local workforce that are more involved than site visits or classroom guest speakers. **Just remember:** you'll want to build a financial plan to support these initiatives long-term.



Add industry-recognized certifications & credentials - These are concrete, objective proof of knowledge & technical skills that are valued by employers. ESSER funds could either support district membership in the credentialing organization, or pay for the certification exams for students. Some certifications we recommend:

- SACA (Industry 4.0)
- FANUC, via NOCTI (Robotics Operator)
- CompTIA (Information Technology)
- MSSC (Industrial Skills & Supply Chain Automation)
- AWS (Welding)
- Unity (Game Development/CS)
- ASE (Automotive)
- NIMS (Industrial Maintenance & Machining)

Offer Youth Apprenticeship - If your state offers YA, start a program at your school. If there isn't an official program in your state, you can work with employers to start a work-and-learn initiative that creates a pathway to the workforce or to a registered apprenticeship.

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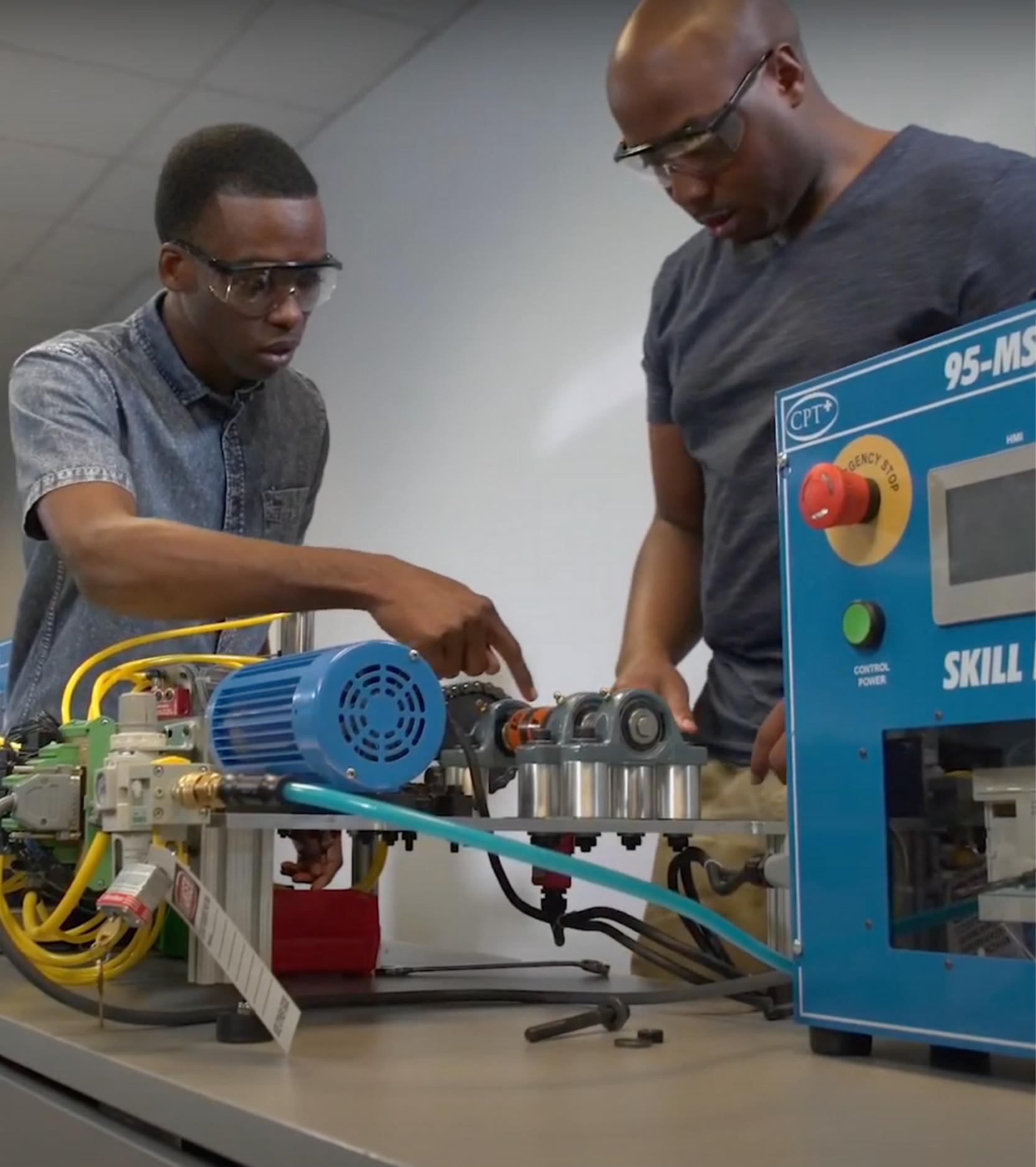
Teacher Training & Support

Teacher shortages, new educational technology, updating labs and curriculum...there's a lot of disruption happening in our CTE classrooms, and instructors have been the cornerstone keeping programs running despite all these changes and challenges.

Your ESSER funds can go toward supporting teachers in multiple ways, many of them tied to the other funding ideas we've presented. Here are a few ideas:

- Invest in ongoing professional development
- Fund training sessions to help prepare teachers to use any new equipment and curriculum purchased with ESSER funds
- Hire new teachers to meet any increased enrollment in CTE, or even bring in industry experts to help lead sections





IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MISSION

No matter how you choose to leverage these once-in-a-lifetime funds, the goal is to support students, provide world-class learning opportunities, and give them all the tools and knowledge they need to step into their future successfully.

Let's dream big with these projects. Let's make great use of this opportunity to innovate our programs, refresh our labs and contribute to the long-term wellness of our workforce and communities!

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Ready to plan some CTE initiatives with your ESSER funds? Our team is here to help.

ATS-LAB Midwest is the midwest's leading STEM and CTE education consultant with over 50 years of working with K-12 districts. We equip schools with the curriculum and equipment to teach students relevant skills for a wide range of high-demand technical career fields.

We take a collaborative, consultative approach to developing a solution that fits your program requirements and budget.

To work with our team, email us: info@labmidwest.com or visit our website www.labmidwest.com



