

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Middle-skill jobs—those that require some postsecondary education and training, but not a four-year college degree—will make up nearly half all job openings in the next decade.¹ One important strategy for increasing the number of workers trained for these jobs is to expand career and technical education (CTE).

CTE generally refers to programs offered at the secondary or postsecondary level that combine academic instruction and occupational skills training to prepare individuals for transition to higher education or the workplace. Although historically associated most closely with fields like manufacturing and construction, state and local CTE programs now cover a range of occupations across numerous career clusters, including programs in health care, information technology, and other fields with high concentrations of middle-skill jobs.² The best CTE programs provide the opportunity to earn stackable industry-recognized credentials along well-defined career pathways, allowing participants to enter the labor market relatively quickly while maintaining the option for further education and training to enhance career prospects and earnings.

Background

Federal investments in CTE are made primarily through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which was last reauthorized by Congress in 2006.³ Unlike many other federal education and training programs, Perkins funds do not provide direct assistance to individuals, but instead provide grants to states to support activities relating to the development and implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Perkins programs are administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE).

Current Legislative Status

The Perkins Act is authorized through Fiscal Year (FY) 2012; it is unclear when Congress will take up reauthorizing legislation, but no action is anticipated before 2013.

OVAE has taken steps to prepare for reauthorization, hosting a series of CTE Community Conversations in 2010-2011 focusing on four key issues: preparing students for college or career success; state and local experiences in implementing a new Programs of Study requirement under the 2006 law; expanding and supporting partnerships to implement Programs of Study; and measuring student success.⁴ Among other things, these sessions revealed support for legislative efforts to better align adult education, postsecondary, career education, and workforce development programs to enhance accessibility for a diversity of participants.⁵

At the same time, the Obama Administration has expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the current CTE system, and in the FY 2012 budget recommended consolidating the two primary state grants under Perkins and cutting overall funding by 20 percent (compared to FY 2010 levels).⁶ Congress accepted most of these recommendations as part of the FY 2011 continuing resolution (see "Perkins Funding for

Perkins At-A-Glance

Statute. Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Public Law 109-270).

Administration. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE).

Reauthorization. Authorized through Fiscal Year 2012.

Federal funding. Federal funding for career and technical education (CTE) in Fiscal Year 2010 was \$1.27 billion—\$1.16 billion for basic state formula grants and just under \$103 million for Tech Prep formula grants. The Fiscal Year 2011 continuing resolution (Public Law 112-10) reduced overall funding for CTE by 11 percent, to \$1.13 billion, achieved by cutting \$35 million from the basic state grant program and eliminating funding for Tech Prep.

Type of program. State formula grants.

Institutions providing services. Include public or nonprofit private institutions of higher education; local education agencies providing education at the postsecondary level; area career and technical education schools providing education at the postsecondary level; postsecondary educational institutions controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or operated by or on behalf of any Indian tribe; educational service agencies; or consortia of eligible institutions.

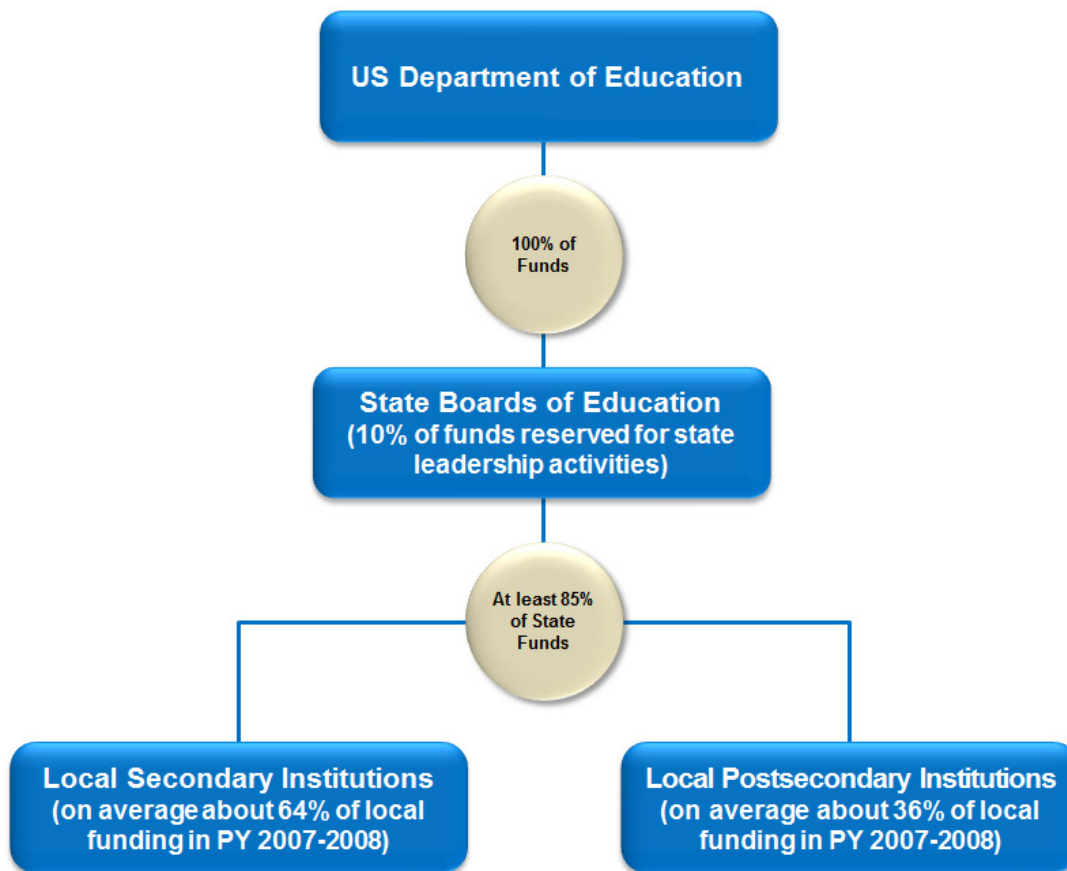
Participants served. In Program Year 2007-2008, more than 14.4 million individuals were enrolled in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs under Perkins.

Policy recommendations.

- ▶ Increase federal funding for CTE to at least the levels provided in Fiscal Year 2010, and take steps to ensure that states invest a minimum percentage of their Perkins funding to support postsecondary CTE programs to ensure that dislocated workers and other adult jobseekers are able to benefit from such services.
- ▶ Provide incentives to states and local areas to connect Programs of Study funded under Perkins with “sector partnerships” targeting specific local or regional industries, and strengthen alignment between CTE and other federally-funded workforce programs by adopting common performance measures across such programs that focus on improving employment and credential attainment outcomes.
- ▶ Ensure the Program of Study model supports educational pathways for low-skilled and working adults, including through integrated education and training (IET) strategies that combine adult education and CTE instruction to enable participants to obtain both secondary diplomas (or equivalents) and industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.

Postsecondary Education” below), and it is expected that further funding cuts will be considered during the FY 2012 appropriations cycle, signaling that this program is not a high priority for policymakers. While Perkins has historically been a relatively noncontroversial program—the 2006 bill received unanimous Senate support, and was approved by a 399-1 vote in the House—the current partisan divides over federal spending levels and the skepticism of some lawmakers regarding federal education and training programs in general suggests that Perkins faces a much tougher road to reauthorization in 2013.

FIGURE 1: Perkins Funding Flow



Funded Activities

The Perkins Act authorizes two primary formula grant programs for states, basic state grants under Title I⁷ and “Tech Prep” grants under Title II.⁸ Basic state grants are provided to state CTE boards, and are then distributed to local educational agencies and postsecondary institutions to support a number of secondary and postsecondary CTE activities. Tech Prep grants are used to support consortia of local agencies and postsecondary institutions for the development and operation of programs consisting of the last two years of secondary education and at least two years of postsecondary education, leading to an associate’s degree or a two-year certificate. States are authorized to consolidate all or a portion of their Tech Prep funds with their Title I funds, but must use any consolidated funds for Title I purposes.⁹

Basic state formula grant funds under Title I must be used to support state leadership activities and local activities.

At the state level, required activities include:

- ▶ Conducting an assessment of Perkins-funded CTE programs in the state;
- ▶ Developing, improving, or expanding the use of technology in career and technical education;
- ▶ Offering professional development programs;
- ▶ Supporting career and technical education programs that improve the academic and career and technical skills of students;
- ▶ Providing preparation for non-traditional fields in current and emerging professions, and other activities that expose students to high-skill, high-wage occupations;
- ▶ Supporting partnerships among local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, adult education providers and other stakeholders to help students achieve state academic standards, and career and technical skills, or complete programs of study;
- ▶ Serving individuals in state institutions, including correctional institutions;
- ▶ Supporting programs for special populations that lead to high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations; and
- ▶ Technical assistance.¹⁰

At the local level, funds must be used to support CTE programs that:

- ▶ Strengthen the academic and career and technical skills of students participating in career and technical education programs;
- ▶ Link career and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, including by offering the relevant elements of not less than one “program of study”;
- ▶ Provide students with strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of an industry, which may include work-based learning experiences;
- ▶ Develop, improve, or expand the use of technology in career and technical education;
- ▶ Provide professional development programs to secondary and postsecondary teachers, faculty, administrators, and counselors;

- ▶ Develop and implement evaluations of the career and technical education programs carried out with Perkins funding, including an assessment of how the needs of special populations are being met;
- ▶ Initiate, improve, expand, and modernize quality career and technical education programs, including relevant technology;
- ▶ Provide services and activities that are of sufficient size, scope, and quality to be effective; and
- ▶ Provide activities to prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations that will lead to self-sufficiency.¹¹

In addition to the required activities above, funds may also be used for “permissive” activities at the state and local levels, including mentoring and support services, providing career guidance and counseling for both secondary and postsecondary students, and the development of new courses or programs of study.

Programs of Study

Under the 2006 Perkins reauthorization, states are required to develop, and all local secondary and postsecondary grant recipients must provide, one or more career and technical “Programs of Study” that combine academic, career and technical components to support successful student transitions to postsecondary education or the workforce. States are encouraged to develop Programs of Study that fit within sixteen “career clusters”—including manufacturing, health, and information technology—recognized by OVAE,¹² and are required to ensure that Programs of Study:

- ▶ Incorporate secondary education and postsecondary education elements;
- ▶ Include coherent and rigorous content aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses that align secondary education with postsecondary education to adequately prepare students to succeed in postsecondary education; and
- ▶ Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate’s or baccalaureate degree.¹³

Programs of Study may include opportunities for secondary students to participate in dual or concurrent enrollment programs or other ways to acquire postsecondary education credits.

State adoption of the Programs of Study model has been less widespread than originally anticipated. Most states only require a limited percentage of Perkins funding to be spent by local recipients to support Programs of Study, and many states still require only the minimum implementation of one Program of Study on the secondary and postsecondary level.¹⁴ The Department of Education has signaled an interest in requiring that all Perkins-funded CTE programs be offered through Programs of Study under the next reauthorization bill.¹⁵ One concern about this approach is that, because of the focus on secondary-to-postsecondary transitions in Programs of Study as currently defined, CTE programs could be less accessible to working adults and other individuals seeking to enter such programs at the postsecondary level.

Perkins Funding for Postsecondary Education

Federal Funding Trends

Federal funding for CTE in FY 2010 was \$1.27 billion—\$1.16 billion for basic state formula grants and just under \$103 million for Tech Prep formula grants. The FY 2011 continuing resolution¹⁶ reduced overall funding for CTE by 11 percent, cutting \$35 million from the basic state grant program and eliminating funding for Tech Prep.¹⁷ Overall, funding for CTE has declined by nearly 30 percent (in inflation-adjusted terms) since FY 1998. Given the current fiscal climate and the Obama Administration's recommendation to further reduce CTE funding to just over \$1 billion (as part of the FY 2012 budget request), it seems unlikely that funding for these activities will be increased to historic levels in the near term.

Allocations of Funds to States and Institutions

Federal Perkins appropriations are allocated to states by a formula primarily based on population within certain age groups and per capita income.¹⁸ Estimated Basic State Grants under Title I ranged from about \$4.2 million (multiple states) to about \$128 million in California in FY 2010.¹⁹ A state may reserve up to 10 percent of its allocation for state leadership activities and up to 5 percent for administration; the remaining 85 percent must be distributed to local educational agencies and other eligible providers.

Each state determines how it will divide funds between local secondary and postsecondary institutions. In Program Year (PY) 2007-2008, states allocated an average of 64 percent of funds to secondary education programs and 36 percent to postsecondary programs.²⁰ Ohio allocated the lowest share of funding to postsecondary programs in PY 2007-2008 at just over 9 percent, while Colorado allocated the highest level of funds to postsecondary programs at 60 percent.

For postsecondary programs, states are required to allocate grants to eligible institutions according a formula based on the number of Pell Grant recipients at each institution.²¹

Populations Served in Postsecondary Institutions Through Perkins

In PY 2007-2008, more than 14.4 million individuals were enrolled in secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs under Perkins, a decrease of about 7 percent from PY 2006-2007. Of postsecondary CTE students for whom demographic data is available:²²

- ▶ 55.2 percent were women;
- ▶ 54.9 percent were white, 10.8 percent were African-American, 21.3 percent were Latino, and 11.4 percent were Asian; and
- ▶ More than 1.25 million were considered economically disadvantaged, while 158,265 had limited English proficiency.

Institutions Providing Postsecondary Services under Perkins

Institutions eligible for postsecondary Perkins funding include:

- ▶ Public or nonprofit private institutions of higher education that offer career and technical education courses that lead to technical skill proficiency, an industry-recognized credential, a certificate, or a degree;

- ▶ Local education agencies providing education at the postsecondary level;
- ▶ Area career and technical education schools providing education at the postsecondary level;
- ▶ Postsecondary educational institution controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or operated by or on behalf of any Indian tribe;
- ▶ Educational service agencies; or
- ▶ Consortia of two or more of the entities described above.²³

Relationship to Other Programs

The 2006 reauthorization expanded coordination requirements under Perkins in several notable ways, including:

- ▶ Requiring states, where possible, to align performance indicators so that substantially similar information gathered for other state and federal programs, or for any other purpose, is used to meet Perkins requirements.²⁴
- ▶ Permitting the use of local funds to provide assistance to Perkins participants in continuing their education or training or finding employment, including through referral to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system.²⁵

Perkins is also included in the list of mandated partners under WIA. Perkins services must be available through the one-stop delivery system, postsecondary institutions receiving Perkins funds must be represented on Workforce Investment Boards, and Perkins services must be coordinated with other federally funded workforce development activities.

Performance Accountability

State Performance Measures

The 2006 reauthorization established separate performance measures for secondary and postsecondary programs. For postsecondary activities, states are required to measure their progress on six indicators:

- ▶ Attainment of challenging career and technical skill proficiencies, including student achievement on technical assessments that are aligned with industry-recognized standards, if available and appropriate;
- ▶ Attainment of an industry-recognized credential, certificate, or degree;
- ▶ Retention in postsecondary education or transfer to a baccalaureate degree;
- ▶ Placement in military service or apprenticeship program or placement or retention in employment, including placement in high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations or professions;
- ▶ Participation in career and technical education programs that lead to employment in nontraditional fields; and
- ▶ Completion of career and technical education programs that lead to employment in nontraditional fields.²⁶

States are required to reach agreement every two years with the Secretary of Education on performance levels for each of the core indicators. Performance levels are to be adjusted for the characteristics of participants and services or instruction provided, among other factors.

States face possible sanctions if they do not reach their negotiated performance levels. If a state fails to meet at least 90 percent of an agreed-upon target for any of the performance indicators, it is required to develop and implement an improvement plan, with special consideration to performance gaps among population subgroups. If performance still does not improve or if the state fails to meet at least 90 percent of a performance level for three consecutive years, the Secretary may withhold all or a portion of a state's funding.

Local Performance Requirements

The 2006 reauthorization added local performance requirements to the program. Local recipients can either adopt the state performance levels or they can negotiate separate performance levels with the state. If they negotiate separate performance levels, local recipients must reach agreement on performance requirements with the state every two years. Such performance levels are to be adjusted for the characteristics of participants and services or instruction provided, among other factors.

Local recipients also face possible sanctions if they do not reach their performance levels. If a local recipient fails to meet at least 90 percent of an agreed-upon target for any of the performance indicators, it is required to develop and implement an improvement plan, with special consideration of performance gaps among population subgroups. If performance still does not improve or if a local recipient fails to meet at least 90 percent of a performance level for three consecutive years, the state may withhold all or a portion of the local recipient's funding.

Performance for Special Populations

States must submit an annual report on how special populations engaged in career and technical education are faring relative to the states' performance goals. Special populations include individuals who are:

- ▶ Living with disabilities;
- ▶ From economically disadvantaged families, including foster children;
- ▶ Preparing for non-traditional fields;
- ▶ Single parents (including single, pregnant women);
- ▶ Displaced homemakers; or
- ▶ Challenged by limited English proficiency.

Policy Recommendations

Increase Federal Funding for CTE

Federal funding for career and technical education has declined by nearly 30 percent in inflation-adjusted terms since FY 1998, and was particularly hard hit in FY 2011, absorbing an 11 percent overall funding cut in addition to the elimination of funding for the Tech Prep program. This loss of funding limits the ability of states and local providers to develop and implement successful CTE programs that prepare participants for emerging jobs and careers. Congress should consider restoring funding for career and technical education programs to at least FY 2010 levels, and take steps to ensure that states invest a minimum percentage of their Perkins funding to support postsecondary CTE programs to ensure that dislocated workers and other adult jobseekers are able to benefit from such services.

Enhance Collaboration between CTE Programs of Study and Sector Partnerships

In recent years, a number of states and communities have adopted sector partnership strategies, which bring together multiple employers and other stakeholders connected to a specific industry—including the public workforce system, education and training providers, unions, and community based organizations—to develop immediate and long-term workforce development strategies to support that industry's growth and competitiveness. CTE programs can play a critical role in these partnerships, helping to support well-defined career pathways that enable workers to obtain the credentials and experience needed for career advancement within targeted industries. Congress should consider providing incentives to states and local areas to connect Programs of Study funded under Perkins with these broader sector-based workforce strategies, and should strengthen alignment between CTE and other federally-funded workforce programs by adopting common performance measures across such programs that focus on improving employment and credential attainment outcomes.

Ensure the Program of Study Model Supports Working-Age Adults

Under current law, Programs of Study must be focused on supporting student transitions from secondary to postsecondary education. While this is an important goal, this emphasis may exclude many individuals beyond the reach of the secondary system who could otherwise benefit from CTE programs, including dislocated workers transitioning to new industries and low-skilled adults seeking to enhance their career prospects. To enable these workers to take advantage of emerging career opportunities, Congress should ensure the Program of Study model supports entry into educational pathways for low-skilled and working adults, including through integrated education and training (IET) strategies that combine adult education and CTE instruction to enable participants to obtain both secondary diplomas (or equivalents) and industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.



To download the complete version of National Skills Coalition's Training Policy in Brief, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org/InBrief.

References

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- 3 PL 109-270.
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- 5 <http://www.ed.gov/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/session-25-national-organizations-dc-4-1-11.doc>.
- 6 <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget12/justifications/n-ctae.pdf>.
- 7 http://cte.ed.gov/Docs/Perkins_IV_Title_I_-_Basic_State_Grants.pdf.
- 8 <http://cte.ed.gov/Docs/factsheets/Perkins%20IV%20Title%20II%20-%20Tech%20Prep%20Education1.pdf>.
- 9 20 U.S.C. 2372.
- 10 20 U.S.C. 2344.
- 11 20 U.S.C. 2355.
- 12 The sixteen career clusters were identified by OVAE and the National Association for State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc). See <http://cte.ed.gov/Docs/factsheets/Career%20Clusters%20and%20Programs%20of%20Study.pdf>.
- 13 20 U.S.C. 2342.
- 14 http://www.careertech.org/file_download/315beca3-fea9-4b7f-b68d-66ec9020dc25.
- 15 <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/rigor-relevance-and-future-career-and-technical-education>.
- 16 PL 112-10. Congress failed to complete any regular appropriations bills in FY 2011, resulting in a series of short-term “continuing resolutions” (CR) to fund the federal government. A final, longer-term CR was passed in April 2011, but included more than \$36 billion in cuts to federal discretionary spending compared to FY 2010 levels.
- 17 <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/federal-policies/federal-funding/>.
- 18 <http://cte.ed.gov/perkinsimplementation/titlei.cfm>.
- 19 <http://cte.ed.gov/docs/Perkins%20IV%20-%20Estimated%20FY%202010%20Allocations%20-%203-11-10.pdf>. By law, no state may receive an allocation that is less than one-half of one percent of total Title I allocations for a fiscal year, or more than 150 percent of the amount allocated to the state during the preceding fiscal year (20 U.S.C. 2321).
- 20 http://cte.ed.gov/docs/Rpt_to_Congress/Report_to_Congress_07-08.pdf.
- 21 20 U.S.C. 2352.
- 22 http://cte.ed.gov/docs/Rpt_to_Congress/Report_to_Congress_07-08.pdf. Some states did not report data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity.
- 23 20 U.S.C. 2302(13).
- 24 20 U.S.C. 2323(b)(2)(F).
- 25 20 U.S.C. 2355(c)(16).
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