



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
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Issue Brief: Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Reauthorization Recommendations to Strengthen CTE

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Reauthorization Recommendations

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Overview

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is the primary dedicated federal funding source for career and technical education (CTE) programs. 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.¹ 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.

“[E]very American should have access to at least one year of higher education or postsecondary training at an affordable cost. A world-class education system that provides high-quality job-training opportunities will reduce skills shortages, spur business growth, encourage new investment and hiring, spark innovation, and promote continued economic growth.” -- U.S. Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan, [*Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*](#)

The Perkins Act authorizes two formula grant programs for states: basic state grants under Title I and “Tech Prep” grants under Title II. 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—which have not been funded since 2010²—are used to support consortia of local agencies and postsecondary institutions for the development and operation of programs during 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

¹ <http://cte.ed.gov/nationalinitiatives/localstudyimplementation.cfm>.

² <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/techprep/funding.html>.



of their Tech Prep funds with their Title I funds, but must use any consolidated funds for Title I purposes.

Current Legislative and Funding Status

Legislative Status

The Perkins Act was last authorized by Congress in 2006.³ Authorization for the Perkins Act expired at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2012, but Congress has temporarily extended the program through FY 2013 under the General Education Provisions Act.⁴ The 113th Congress may make efforts to reauthorize the Perkins Act before it expires at the end of the fiscal year.⁵

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), which has jurisdiction over Perkins, 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 (POS) requirement under the 2006 law; expanding and supporting partnerships to implement POS; and measuring student success.⁶ 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.⁷

Funding Status

At the same time, the Obama Administration has expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the current CTE system, and in its FY 2012 budget proposal recommended consolidating the two state grants under Perkins and cutting overall funding by 20 percent (compared to FY 2010 levels).⁸ Congress accepted most of these recommendations as part of the FY 2011 appropriations bill. Congress increased funding for Perkins slightly in 2012, and the Administration's request for FY 2012 maintained those levels. The current Continuing Resolution (CR), which expires at the end of March, maintains FY 2012 funding levels for Perkins.⁹

³ P.L. 109-270.

⁴ Cassandra Dortch, *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006: Implementation Issues*, Congressional Research Service (December 14, 2012).

⁵ It has been suggested that Congress may consider CTE reauthorization as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization

⁶ <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/11/improving-career-and-technical-education/>.

⁷ <http://www.ed.gov/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/session-25-national-organizations-dc-4-1-11.doc>.

⁸ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget12/justifications/n-ctae.pdf>.

⁹ P.L. 112-175.



FY 2010 Enacted	FY 2011 Enacted	FY 2012 Enacted	2013 Enacted (level funding under CR expiring 3/27/13)	FY 10 vs. FY 13	Percent Change FY 10 to FY 13
\$1,271,694,000	\$1,122,164,010	\$1,123,030,275	\$1,123,030,275	(\$148,663,725)	-11.69%

The Obama Administration's Blueprint for Perkins Reauthorization

In April 2012, the Obama Administration released *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*¹⁰, an outline for Perkins reauthorization should Congress decide take it up in the near term.

The Blueprint is based on four principles for reauthorization: **accountability, collaboration, alignment, and innovation.**

- **Accountability:** Meaningful accountability for improving academic outcomes and building technical and employability skills in CTE programs for all students, based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance.

In perhaps the most significant departure from current law, the Administration would maintain formula funding to states but would eliminate formula funding for local recipients. Instead, the Administration would require states to award CTE funding through within-state competition. The Administration would also require states to adopt common definitions for participation and performance, aligned with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the Higher Education Act (HEA). States would be required to disaggregate data by subgroup in order to identify gaps in performance or delivery, and data collected would be incorporated into states' longitudinal data systems (SLDS).

- **Collaboration:** Strong collaborations among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners to improve the quality of CTE programs.

Under the Administration's proposal, institutions applying for funding under Perkins would be required to do so as a consortium. At a minimum, consortia must include a local educational agency (LEA) and a postsecondary institution that offers a two-year degree, although they may include other partners as well (including local workforce agencies). The Blueprint would further require states to obtain a private sector match from employers, industry or labor. Matches may either be cash or in-kind, in the form of equipment, training facilities, or other training resources.

¹⁰ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/transforming-career-technical-education.pdf>.



- **Alignment:** Effective alignment between high-quality CTE programs and labor market needs to equip students with 21st-century skills and prepare them for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors.

Under current law, states are permitted, but not required, to work with local workforce or economic development agencies to develop CTE programs that prepare students for careers in high-demand, high-growth industries in the local area or region. The Blueprint would make it a requirement that states establish partnerships with these entities, in an effort to ensure that skills students obtain match up with local demand.

- **Innovation:** Increased emphasis on innovation supported by systemic reform of state policies and practices to support CTE implementation of effective practices at the local level.

Consistent with Administration efforts to reward innovative and successful programs, the proposal would permit states to award additional performance-based funding to consortia that are successful in closing performance gaps in subgroups and improving overall student outcomes.

Policy Recommendations

National Skills Coalition supports efforts to reauthorize the Perkins program before it expires at the end of the fiscal year. The Administration’s Blueprint serves as a useful starting point; however, there remain some issues that National Skills Coalition would like to see addressed during reauthorization.

Ensure Programs of Study Model Works for All Learners

The 2006 Perkins reauthorization created Programs of Study, which bear a strong resemblance to the career pathways model. Programs of Study were imagined as a means to move secondary students through secondary and postsecondary courses connected to a specific industry or sector, eventually leading to a targeted postsecondary credential.

As currently written, the POS model puts exclusive emphasis on integrating career and technical education beginning at the secondary level and continuing into the postsecondary level. National Skills Coalition is concerned that this approach may limit the population of learners that can benefit from this model. For instance, the POS model lacks access points for out-of-school youth, dislocated workers, or low-skilled adults, including those individuals that may not have attained a high school diploma or equivalent.

Should policymakers decide to expand the POS model—which NSC supports—they should ensure that there are multiple points of entry for adult learners. This may include integrating Adult Basic Education (ABE) with CTE, or developing career pathways for CTE that begin at the postsecondary level.



Program and Outcome Measure Alignment

The Obama Administration's CTE proposal would require common definitions for performance indicators across WIA, ESEA, and HEA, an improvement to current law NSC strongly supports. Common definitions would help align these programs at the state and local level. We would recommend including Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and other human capital programs among those sharing common definitions.

Further, the Administration would require states to incorporate CTE data into their state longitudinal data systems (SLDS), in an effort to capture young people and adults who take alternative pathways in their education and therefore may not be captured by SLDS. National Skills Coalition has long supported linking Department of Labor-funded programs to SLDS systems, and would encourage the Department of Education to make its data systems more comprehensive by including CTE and ABE enrollees among the participants tracked.

Although the Administration's blueprint is silent on specific outcome measures for Perkins-funded programs, policymakers must ensure that programmatic success is not defined so narrowly as to only include the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. Many Perkins learners come from outside the secondary education system—including those individuals who have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent, or older workers transitioning into a new field. Outcome measures should be reflective of the individuals served by CTE, and should focus on the transition from education to employment as well as from secondary to postsecondary education.

Engaging Employers through Sector Partnerships

The best WIA-funded workforce programs have strong connections to local employers, to ensure program participants obtain the skills that are in-demand by local or regional industries. The same can be said for the best CTE programs. National Skills Coalition strongly supports industry engagement across the spectrum of human capital programs, and the reality is that many programs are already engaging with employers to appropriately tailor curriculum to local industry needs. However, multiple programs drawing from the same pool of employers can unnecessarily strain resources and limit the effectiveness of such partnerships.

NSC urges policymakers to fund new local capacity for sector-based workforce 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. These industry partnerships function as a single point of contact with multiple local or regional employers, and can help facilitate collaboration across programs such as WIA, CTE, ABE, and HEA, ultimately helping to align workforce development programs on the local level.