



Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006: Implementation Issues

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Summary

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV; P.L. 109-270) supports the development of academic and career and technical skills among secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education (CTE) programs, sometimes referred to as vocational education programs. Perkins IV was authorized through FY2012, which ended on September 30, 2012. The authorization is extended through FY2013 under the General Education Provisions Act. This report provides a summary of potential reauthorization issues that Congress may consider in the 113th Congress.

Potential reauthorization issues and recommendations have been put forward by the Department of Education, the Obama Administration's blueprint for reauthorization of Perkins IV, stakeholder and advocacy groups, and program evaluations. If Congress considers reauthorization of the Perkins act, key issues may include the following:

- To what extent should the federal government support CTE and in what ways, given competing priorities and an environment of fiscal constraint?
- How can the validity, reliability, and consistency of Perkins IV performance measures be improved to better assess program effectiveness while still allowing states flexibility to structure their CTE programs to meet state/local needs?
- How can the technical skills, academic/disciplinary proficiency, pedagogical, and classroom management capabilities of pre-service and in-service CTE teachers be maximized to ensure CTE students are academically and technically proficient?
- How can the secondary to postsecondary transitions and postsecondary completions of CTE students be facilitated and increased?
- What kinds of relationships should be fostered between the Perkins act, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA; P.L. 105-220), and business and industry to strengthen the nation's workforce development system?
- What is the optimal involvement of local business and industry representatives in the development and maintenance of CTE programs to ensure the CTE programs provide relevant curriculum and technical skills that respond to regional or national labor markets and that maximize the students' post-education opportunities?
- How should Perkins IV funds be allocated to the states in the event of a potential decrease in funding levels?
- Should the Perkins IV funding mechanism be modified to balance the continuation of CTE programs with increased innovation in the development and delivery of CTE programs?

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Introduction and Program Background

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV; P.L. 109-270) is intended to develop the academic and career and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education (CTE) programs, particularly programs that prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations in current or emerging professions. CTE, sometimes referred to as vocational education, provides occupational and non-occupational preparation at the secondary, postsecondary, and adult education levels.¹ As defined in a publication by the U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), collectively, CTE prepares students for roles outside the paid labor market, teaches general employment skills, and teaches skills required in specific occupations or careers.² For example, CTE provides preparation in homemaking and a variety of occupations, such as nursing, business administration, culinary arts, automotive maintenance, software programming, engineering technology, and cosmetology.

Perkins IV authorizes five main programs:

- the Basic State Grants program,
- the Tech Prep grant program,
- the Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions grant program (TCPCTIP),
- National Programs, and
- Occupational and Employment Information.

Over 90% of the funds appropriated under Perkins IV are used to provide Basic State Grants. These formula grants are awarded to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and each outlying area. States subsequently make grants to support CTE activities at the secondary and postsecondary levels primarily in local educational agencies (LEAs), area CTE schools, and community colleges. Grant recipients are expected to develop rigorous and challenging academic and technical standards and assist students in meeting such standards.³ The standards must incorporate linkages between secondary and postsecondary education. Grantees must also implement one program of study (see box below); provide professional development that improves the quality of CTE instruction and counseling; and support partnerships among educational institutions, local workforce investment boards, and business and industry.

¹ CTE is also referred to as career education, technical and vocational education (TVET), and technical education. For more information on CTE, see CRS Report R42748, *Career and Technical Education (CTE): A Primer*, by (name redacted).

² K. Levesque, J. Laird, E. Hensley, S.P. Choy, E.F. Cataldi, and L. Hudson, *Career and Technical Education in the United States: 1990 to 2005* (NCES 2008-035), National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC, 2008, p. B-2.

³ The academic curriculum and standards must be aligned with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

Programs of Study

Programs of study (POS) were intended as a major innovation and improvement to Perkins IV in comparison to the Perkins act as previously authorized, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Amendments of 1998 (Perkins III; P.L. 105-332). Each grantee at the secondary and postsecondary education level must adopt the relevant elements of at least one POS identified by the state. POS incorporate all of the critical aspects of CTE: academic standards, CTE skills, a progression from secondary to postsecondary education, and a recognized credential. POS

- incorporate secondary and postsecondary education elements;
- include coherent and rigorous content aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant career and technical content in a coordinated, nonduplicative progression of courses that align secondary and postsecondary education to adequately prepare students to succeed in postsecondary education;
- may include the opportunity for secondary education students to acquire postsecondary education credits, including through dual or concurrent enrollment; and
- lead to an industry-recognized postsecondary credential, certificate, associate degree, or baccalaureate degree.

Students who complete a POS are expected to be prepared for either employment or further education.

Perkins IV authorizes another state formula grant program known as Tech Prep. The program has not been funded since FY2010. The goal of the program is to combine and coordinate secondary and postsecondary vocational education activities into a coherent sequence of courses, known as the “2+2” model for two years of secondary education followed by two years of postsecondary education, which may include a two-year apprenticeship program. Under Tech Prep, states award grants to consortia consisting of participants from both the secondary and postsecondary education levels. Consortia use the funds to develop and maintain CTE 2+2 programs of study; meet state developed academic standards; provide in-service professional development for teachers, faculty, and administrators; and provide professional development programs for counselors.

Perkins IV requires that recipients of funds from the Basic State Grants and Tech Prep programs meet accountability provisions as outlined in statutory provisions. The accountability system requires that states and local providers meet targets, referred to as adjusted levels of performance, on various indicators of performance or face sanctions. The indicators of performance measure the extent to which CTE students who concentrate in a particular CTE program attain academic and skill proficiency; receive educational credentials such as diplomas and certificates; prepare for nontraditional fields; and continue to post-education employment or further education. The sanctions may include the development and implementation of improvement plans and a loss of federal funding.

Under TCPCTIP, Perkins IV authorizes grants to two tribally controlled postsecondary career and technical institutions: United Tribes Technical College in North Dakota and Navajo Technical College in New Mexico. Funds may be used for CTE programs and for the associated institutional support costs. Appropriations for TCPCTIP were \$8.1 million in FY2012.

In addition to the grant programs, Perkins IV authorizes the conduct and dissemination of national research and information on best practices that improve CTE programs through two initiatives. National Programs support research, evaluation, and dissemination of CTE practices. Occupational and Employment Information supports the dissemination of occupational and employment information.

Perkins IV is the main source of specific federal funding for CTE.⁴ The most recent assessment of total funds expended on CTE that were federal funds was published in 2004 by ED and estimated that 5% of CTE expenditures were federal funds.⁵ The remainder is funded by state and local funds. Perkins IV was authorized by statute through FY2012 and was funded at \$1.1 billion in FY2012. The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) automatically extends the authorization for one additional fiscal year to FY2013.⁶ If Congress considers reauthorizing the act in the 113th Congress, there are several implementation and policy issues that may be addressed. This report outlines several reauthorization issues that have been raised by stakeholders and evaluations.

Potential Reauthorization Issues

The following collection of potential reauthorization issues is based on ED guidance, the Administration's blueprint for reauthorization of Perkins IV (hereinafter referred to as the *Perkins Blueprint*),⁷ issues raised by stakeholder and advocacy groups, and program evaluations. Some of the issues were raised by the 2004 *National Assessment of Vocational Education: Final Report to Congress* (hereinafter referred to as the *2004 NAVE*) in connection with Perkins III and have not been fully resolved.⁸ These issues do not represent an exhaustive list of potential issues.

On April 19, 2012, the Obama Administration announced the *Perkins Blueprint* in an effort to support the creation of more high quality CTE programs through a reauthorized Perkins act. The *Perkins Blueprint* is intended to conform to the policy goals of all high school graduates being prepared for both college and a career and the United States having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. The proposal is expected to “usher in a new era of rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE shaped by four core principles” through

1. more effective alignment of CTE programs with labor market needs and high-growth industry sectors, in particular;
2. stronger collaboration among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners in an effort to improve the quality of CTE programs;
3. a meaningful accountability system based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance; and
4. increased innovation supported through systemic reform of state policies and practices.

⁴ Considerably more federal funding is provided indirectly for postsecondary CTE through federal student loans and grants.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service, *National Assessment of Vocational Education: Final Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C., 2004.

⁶ For more information on GEPA's Contingent Extension of Programs, see CRS Report R41119, *General Education Provisions Act (GEPA): Overview and Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted), pp. 3-4.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*, Washington, D.C., 2012.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service, *National Assessment of Vocational Education: Final Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C., 2004.

Level of Federal Support for CTE

Over the past 10 years, reduced funding has been requested for Perkins IV and the Perkins act as previously authorized, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Amendments of 1998 (Perkins III; P.L. 105-332). In some instances, this has been due to perceived shortcomings in the programs' outcomes and the desire to fund higher priorities, including during periods of fiscal constraint. For FY2012, the Barack Obama Administration requested \$1 billion for Perkins IV, a decrease of \$264 million (21%) from the FY2011 request, because the overall fiscal environment required some funding reductions and the programs failed to show evidence of strong performance.⁹

In FY2004-FY2009, the George W. Bush Administration requested little to no funding for Perkins III and IV consistent with its policy of eliminating funding for programs that were unable to demonstrate effectiveness, were narrowly focused, or whose objectives might be better accomplished through other programs.¹⁰ Rather than funding CTE, the budgets would have provided funding for high school reform. The Administration indicated that CTE students would be better served through increases in programs that aim to improve the quality of high school education, particularly for students who are struggling academically and are likely to drop out or to graduate without the education needed to succeed in postsecondary education or the workforce.

As part of budgetary deliberation in past years, questions have arisen regarding the need for and appropriate size of a federal CTE program. These issues may resurface if reauthorization is considered.

Lack of Reliable and Comparable Outcome Data

The Perkins IV performance data submitted by states and local providers has been criticized for its lack of validity, reliability, and consistency. Because of the lack of validity, reliability, and consistency, programs are sometimes deemed to be of unproven quality, questions arise about the extent to which CTE completers are prepared for college or careers, and it is difficult to assess CTE student and program outcomes from a national perspective.

Perkins IV does not establish standard definitions or methodologies for collecting and measuring the indicators of performance. States have developed differing methodologies for measuring each of the performance indicators (see box below). A 2009 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO; hereinafter referred to as the *2009 GAO Perkins IV report*) observed that the flexibility within the Perkins IV performance measures, which allows states flexibility to structure and evaluate their CTE programs to meet state/local needs, frustrates the evaluation of the effectiveness and outcomes of CTE programs nationally.¹¹

Since Perkins IV prohibits ED from issuing regulations except to administer and ensure compliance with the specific requirements of the act, ED is collaborating with states to improve the validity, reliability, consistency, and quality of Perkins IV data. In March 2007 to combat the

⁹ President's Budget Request, FY2012, pp. N-16-N-17.

¹⁰ The President's requests were \$0 for FY2004-FY2007 and FY2009, and \$617 million for FY2008.

¹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Career and Technical Education: States Have Broad Flexibility in Implementing Perkins IV*, GAO-09-683, July 29, 2009.

data discrepancies, ED recommended standard definitions and measurement approaches through nonregulatory guidance.¹² Based on the most recent data available during the 2008-2009 school year, 15 states used the nonregulatory guidance definitions at the secondary level, and 37 states used the definitions at the postsecondary level. ED provides ongoing technical assistance to states as requested and during monitoring site visits. ED also hosts an annual Data Quality Institute (DQI) and monthly Next Steps Working Group (NSWG) conference calls to promote sharing and encourage consistency across states.

Congress may consider revising the Perkins performance measurement system during reauthorization to address the data quality and comparability issues. Congress sought to strengthen the performance measurement system of Perkins IV in comparison to Perkins III by specifying separate indicators for the secondary and postsecondary levels and using several ESEA indicators. The *Perkins Blueprint* would require states to use common definitions for the participation and performance indicators in an effort to allow “the objective, valid, and externally verifiable analysis of student and program outcomes.” Other stakeholders, including the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), have recommended that reauthorization of Perkins establish indicators that are more consistent across states and that are based on data that are easier to collect.

¹² Program Memorandum from Troy R. Justesen, Ed.D., Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, to State Directors of Career and Technical Education, on “Student Definitions and Measurement Approaches for the Core Indicators of Performance Under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV)”, March 13, 2007.

State Methodologies for Measuring Perkins IV Indicators of Performance

States have developed differing methodologies for measuring each of the Perkins IV performance indicators. The following are examples of key discrepancies between states that frustrate the assessment of the effects of CTE across or within states.

CTE Concentrators

With the exception of the core indicators of performance related to nontraditional fields, states report core indicators for CTE concentrators only. States define secondary CTE concentrators in different ways. For example, Iowa defines a CTE concentrator as a secondary student who earned at least 1.5 units in a CTE program area, and Massachusetts defines a CTE concentrator as a secondary student who was enrolled in a CTE program for two years.

Measurement of Technical Skill Attainment

Perkins IV requires states to measure the technical skill attainment of secondary and postsecondary students. The methods employed to measure career and technical skill attainment vary across states and the types of skills. For example, some states evaluate career and technical skill attainment using assessments developed by industry or other third parties or schools. Some schools assess skill attainment through grade point averages (GPAs) or course or program completions. States have indicated two primary impediments to using reliable and comparable assessments of career and technical skill attainment. First, states have suggested that they have inadequate resources to develop and implement their own assessments and inadequate resources to pay for assessments conducted by third parties. Second, the results assessments conducted by third parties may be difficult for states to obtain since the results are sent to the individuals taking the assessment, and those individuals may or may not want to share their results.

Post-Education Placement

Three of the core indicators of performance (one at the secondary level and two at the postsecondary level) measure the extent to which CTE concentrators are placed in employment or pursue further education. Collecting data on post-education placement is challenging because it requires linking student secondary education records from the public school system and private schools, postsecondary education data from every state's public system and private postsecondary providers, and workforce data from income or unemployment records. According to a 2012 survey, 43 states were matching K-12 and postsecondary data, 14 states were matching K-12 and workforce data, and 17 states were matching postsecondary and workforce data; and of these, only 8 matched all three data sources. Although these states have developed longitudinal data systems, the systems may not be robust in terms of the ability to track private school students, individuals who move into or out of the state, or certain types of employment. As a result, the longitudinal data on students can be incomplete. Because of the varying quality of data systems across states, core indicators of performance lack valid, reliable, and comparable measurement approaches.

Program Evaluation

Perkins IV funds program evaluations by local providers, states, and the federal government. The evaluations are intended to measure effectiveness and spur continual improvement. A reauthorization of Perkins IV could be informed by the findings and recommendations of program evaluations.

Reauthorizations of the Perkins acts in 1998 and 2006 were informed by the publication of recent national program evaluations completed in 1994 and 2004, respectively. The national evaluations provided options and recommendations to improve the Perkins acts. ED has not yet published a national evaluation of Perkins IV that could be used to reinforce or reject proposals to reauthorize Perkins IV.

The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) is funded by ED to carry out scientifically based research and evaluation to improve the education, employment, and training of CTE participants and to improve the preparation and professional development of CTE faculty. The NRCCTE publishes evaluations based on selected sites or states such that the results or findings may not be representative of the nation. Therefore, the NRCCTE evaluations may not indicate findings that are as broadly applicable as those from national evaluations.

According to the 2009 GAO Perkins IV report, fewer than half of states had conducted an effectiveness evaluation of their CTE programs in the preceding five years. In addition, states are not required to report the outcomes of any program evaluations that they conduct.

Adequacy of Secondary Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development

The trend of integrating academic instruction into CTE courses and preparing CTE students for college or an immediate career may alter the qualifications and professional development needs of secondary CTE teachers. Approaches for improving secondary CTE teachers have focused on recruiting individuals with experience and strong technical backgrounds, developing their pedagogical and classroom management capabilities, and ensuring they are current with industry and technological advances. The quality of secondary CTE teachers may be discussed if reauthorization is considered.

In 2004-2005, secondary education providers expended 27% of their Perkins III funds on instructional staff and 7% on professional development.¹³ In addition, in the absence of a national database, the NRCCTE indicated that in 2011, there was anecdotal evidence that school districts were having trouble hiring CTE teachers with sufficient technical knowledge and experience.¹⁴ A 2010 survey of state CTE directors revealed that at least 15 states perceived a shortage of CTE teachers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, health science, and manufacturing.¹⁵

A report prepared by MPR Associates, Inc., and based on 2008 survey data from ED's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that CTE teachers were more likely to have a strong technical background than an understanding of pedagogy and teaching skills. A greater proportion of public school CTE teachers (26%) entered teaching through an alternative certification process than public school teachers who primarily provided academic education (18%). In addition, a smaller percentage of public school CTE teachers (80%) were highly qualified compared to public school teachers who primarily provided academic education (90%).¹⁶ The certification process and highly qualified status may be explained, in part, by a higher proportion of public school CTE teachers not having a bachelor's degree (10%) compared to public school teachers who primarily provided academic education (less than 1%). Teachers of CTE subjects that frequently do not require bachelor's degrees for employment are less likely to have bachelor's degrees. For example, 43% of CTE teachers in repair and transportation; 62% of CTE teachers in manufacturing; and 69% of CTE teachers in construction, architecture, and engineering technologies have bachelor's degrees.¹⁷

¹³ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, *State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume VI—Targeting and Uses of Federal Education Funds*, Washington, D.C., 2009, pp. 66, 69, 149.

¹⁴ Professional Development Joint Working Group, *Improving Secondary Career and Technical Education through Professional Development: Alternative Certification and Use of Technical Assessment Data*, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, Louisville, KY, March 2011.

¹⁵ National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, *A Look Inside: A Synopsis of CTE Trends: A Four-Part Series Analyzing State CTE Data and Initiatives: Focus: Teacher and Faculty Shortage*, Silver Spring, MD, November 2010.

¹⁶ For more information about highly qualified teachers, see CRS Report R42127, *Teacher Quality Issues in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, by (name redacted).

¹⁷ Vera Bersudskaya and Emily Forrest Cataldi, *Public High School Teachers of Career and Technical Education in* (continued...)

Given the expectations that CTE students become both technically and academically proficient, it is important that CTE teachers have technical skills, academic/disciplinary proficiency, pedagogical, and classroom management capabilities. In 2008, public school teachers who primarily provided occupational education indicated the greatest need for professional development in subject content, student discipline and classroom management, and the use of technology. Also in 2008, the majority (82%) of public school teachers who primarily provided occupational education received professional development on their subject content.¹⁸ Of these teachers 81% received at least nine hours of professional development on their subject content, but only 31% of those teachers found the professional development useful.¹⁹

Improving Secondary to Postsecondary Transitions

A key intended outcome of Perkins IV was better linkages between secondary and postsecondary education through the implementation of programs of study (POS), concurrent or dual enrollment and credit, emphasis on the establishment of articulation agreements, the promotion of partnerships between secondary and postsecondary education providers, and the authorization of Tech Prep. Evidence suggests that secondary to postsecondary transitions for CTE students have been difficult to foster and maintain. The *Perkins Blueprint* would further promote transitions by requiring states to award funds to consortia of secondary and postsecondary education providers. In addition, the consortia would be required “to establish or adopt secondary-postsecondary articulation agreements for each funded CTE program.”

The Tech Prep 2+2 model and POS are similar methods for facilitating secondary to postsecondary transitions. Both require a coordinated, nonduplicative progression of courses spanning secondary and postsecondary education. Implementation of the 2+2 model is a Tech Prep requirement just as implementation of POS is a requirement of the Basic State Grant. The following subsections describe some findings regarding the apparent effectiveness of these two mechanisms for improving secondary and postsecondary linkages.

Tech Prep

The *2004 NAVE* found that the Tech Prep 2+2 model under Perkins III was not fully successful in improving secondary to postsecondary transitions. Few Tech Prep consortia offered the structured 2+2 model; instead, each consortia member offered relevant components of the 2+2 model with little coordination. There was limited evidence that Tech Prep students enrolled in college at slightly higher rates than non-Tech Prep students. Overall, the Tech Prep experience and structure differed little from those offered to other CTE students. Perkins IV intended to improve the Perkins III 2+2 model by requiring programs be carried out under an articulation agreement. Tech Prep was last funded in FY2010.

(...continued)

2007-08, Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics under Contract No. ED-07-CO-0104 with MPR Associates, Inc., NCES 2011-235, February 2011.

¹⁸ Xianglei Chen and Joanna Wu, *Public Career and Technical Education High Schools, Principals, and Teachers in 2008*, Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics under Contract No. ED-07-CO-0104 with MPR Associates, Inc., NCES 2012-250, June 2012, p. Tables 10 and 11.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Programs of Study (POS)

Under the Perkins IV Basic State Grants, local education providers are required to implement the relevant elements of at least one POS. Perkins IV does not require that local education providers implement the POS through articulation agreements. Two research projects are in progress to determine if POS under the Basic State Grants have been effective in increasing the number of students who complete a structured and integrated program of study following consecutive years of secondary and postsecondary education.

Preliminary results of ongoing research initiated in 2008 are available for POS at three community colleges and their feeder high schools that exhibited strong secondary-postsecondary linkages, evidence of students completing both the secondary and postsecondary components of POS, and dual credit options.²⁰ The research relies on observation, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and student records. Each site had college staff dedicated to fostering the secondary-postsecondary linkages and a separate advisory committee for each POS with secondary, postsecondary, and business members. Common issues across sites included

- scheduling courses at the secondary and postsecondary institutions,
- paying for and securing transportation between the secondary and postsecondary institutions,
- ensuring teachers and instructors had the requisite credentials for both the secondary and postsecondary institutions,
- ensuring dual credits were accepted and recognized by postsecondary institutions, and
- providing sufficient guidance counseling to secondary students.

There was little evidence of academic curriculum integration from secondary to postsecondary education. Of the POS high school graduates, 17% enrolled in the same POS at the POS postsecondary institution. Data on the postsecondary enrollment outcomes of the remainder of POS high school graduates was incomplete.

In 2010, the NRCCTE published preliminary results from a qualitative analysis of the status of POS implementation in six states that had shown overt interest in implementing POS successfully.²¹ A key implementation challenge indicated by surveyed stakeholders was the difficulty developing and sustaining relationships between academic and CTE instructors at the secondary level in order to integrate curriculum and between secondary and postsecondary instructors to link instruction. The role of linkages between secondary and postsecondary education may again receive attention in a reauthorization.

²⁰ Corinne Alfeld and Sharika Bhattacharya, "Mature Programs of Study: A Structure for the Transition to College and Career?," *International Journal of Educational Reform*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 119-137.

²¹ Programs of Study Joint Technical Working Group, *Programs of Study: Year 3 Joint Technical Report*, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, Louisville, KY, July 2011, pp. 50-55.

Relationship with the Workforce Investment Act

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA; P.L. 105-220), the main federal workforce development legislation, was enacted to bring about increased coordination among federal workforce development and related programs. Since Perkins IV is part of the nation's workforce development system, some stakeholders have advocated a stronger relationship between the two programs. Perkins IV primarily promotes three types of linkages between the act and WIA: unified planning, stakeholder consultation and coordination, and fund consolidation.

Rather than submitting a separate Perkins IV state plan, the state plan may be submitted as part of a Section 501 Unified Plan. Section 501 of the WIA allows states to develop a single plan for two or more of several eligible programs and activities. The eligible programs and activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Secondary Perkins IV activities with prior approval of state legislature;
- Postsecondary Perkins IV activities;
- Perkins IV Tech-Prep Education;
- WIA Youth Activities, which provides training and related services to low-income youth ages 14-21 through formula grants allocated to states;²²
- WIA Adult Activities, which provides training and related services to individuals ages 18 and older through formula grants allocated to states;
- WIA Dislocated Workers Activities, which provides training and related services to individuals who have lost their jobs and are unlikely to return to those jobs or similar jobs in the same industry;
- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA; WIA, Title II), which helps adults become literate, employed, self-sufficient, and secondary school completers,²³ and
- The employment and training component of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides assistance specifically for the purchase of food to households below a certain income threshold.²⁴

The unified plan must meet all of the Perkins IV requirements, the requirements in Section 501 of WIA, and the requirements of the other programs and activities included in the plan.

²² The formula grant programs for youth, adults, and dislocated workers are authorized by Chapters 4 and 5 of subtitle B of title I of Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220). For more information on these programs, see CRS Report R41135, *The Workforce Investment Act and the One-Stop Delivery System*, by (name redacted).

²³ For more information on AEFLA, see CRS Report R41135, *The Workforce Investment Act and the One-Stop Delivery System*, by (name redacted).

²⁴ CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*, by (name redacted), pp.8-11.

Regardless of whether the state chooses to develop a separate Perkins IV state plan or a Section 501 Unified Plan, the state plan for Perkins IV Basic State Grants must

- be developed in consultation with state-level WIBs, and
- describe the procedures to ensure coordination and non-duplication among other federal workforce programs, including WIA, and describe the memorandum of understanding for the operation of one-stop centers concerning the provision of services for postsecondary students and school dropouts.²⁵

A state may use Perkins IV funds to provide additional funds to the programs authorized by Chapters 4 and 5 of subtitle B of Title I of WIA or the Wagner-Peyser Act (WPA; 29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.). Chapters 4 and 5 of subtitle B of Title I of WIA authorize formula grant programs for youth, adults, and dislocated workers. WPA authorizes the Employment Service (ES), which is the central component of most states' One-Stop delivery systems, providing universal access to job seekers and employers. The resulting program supported with Perkins IV funding must meet the requirements of both Perkins IV and the program supported with Perkins IV funds; serve the same individuals that are served under Perkins IV; provide services in a coordinated manner with Perkins IV-funded services; and supplement, not supplant, funds provided from non-federal sources.

Perkins IV also provides opportunities for activity coordination with WIA. One of the permissible state leadership activities and one of the permissible activities for secondary and postsecondary CTE education providers is offering assistance to individuals who have participated in Perkins' services and activities in finding an appropriate job, such as through referral to the system established under WIA. States are also required to provide the WIA one-stop service delivery system a listing of all school dropout, postsecondary education, and adult programs assisted under Perkins. At the local level, the plans of secondary and postsecondary CTE providers are required to describe, if applicable, how representatives of local WIBs will be involved in assessing the Perkins' funded CTE programs and how they will be informed of the Perkins' requirements and programs.

The aforementioned linkages have been criticized for being either voluntary or ambiguous because, for example, the extent of consultation and collaboration are not defined. As WIA and Perkins IV may be considered for reauthorization, the issue of whether to improve linkages may reemerge. The *Perkins Blueprint* has already proposed that "each state would identify in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors on which CTE programs in their region would focus" based on "collaboration with its workforce and economic development agencies."

Sustainable and Relevant Business Involvement

Perkins IV supports business and industry collaboration with CTE. The collaboration is fundamental to ensuring the relevance of the curriculum and technical skills taught and the existence of post-education opportunities. Under Perkins IV, states and local recipients must consult with many stakeholders, including business and industry representatives, in developing their CTE programs and involve the stakeholders in implementing the programs. States and local

²⁵ For more information on one-stop centers, see CRS Report R41135, *The Workforce Investment Act and the One-Stop Delivery System*, by (name redacted).

recipients may use a portion of their funds to support partnerships between business and education. Local recipients may partner with local business to provide work-related experiences for students, such as internships, cooperative education, school-based enterprises, entrepreneurship, and job shadowing that are related to CTE programs.

The level of collaboration promoted through Perkins IV has been criticized for not being more prescriptive and integral. The *Perkins Blueprint* proposes requiring a private sector matching contribution from business, industry, or labor partners to increase participation.

One drawback to strong involvement by local business and industry representatives, however, is the potential to develop programs of study that do not offer portable skills. Portable skills prepare participants to compete for employment in other regions or internationally.

Alternative Funding Mechanisms

The method for funding states and local education providers is expected to support the goals of Perkins IV. A continued decline in program funding may provoke changes to the state distribution formula. Alternative funding mechanisms have been proposed to better meet the policy objectives.

State Formula Allocations

Funding for the Perkins IV Basic State Grants has decreased from the FY2006 level of \$1.18 billion to \$1.12 billion in FY2012. Given the current fiscal environment, it is possible that appropriations will decrease further in the future. An important aspect of the calculation of state formula allocations is the FY1998 hold harmless for all states (\$0.93 billion). Reductions in appropriations will result in more states receiving their FY1998 hold harmless grant amount. The consequence is that states whose population has increased or per capita income has decreased since FY1998 will be less likely to receive an allocation that reflects current demographics.

In FY2012, 16 states (Alabama, Alaska, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming, and Puerto Rico) are estimated to receive their FY1998 grant amounts.²⁶ The population and per capita income of these 16 states have changed in comparison to the other states such that they would receive smaller allocations if the FY1998 grant amount were not a minimum. An additional seven states are estimated to receive the adjusted 0.5% minimum (Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). The allocations of the remaining states are reduced to accommodate the statutorily required minimum grant allocations. Thus states that are not receiving a minimum grant may not be receiving a grant amount that reflects the states' current demographics. If appropriations continue to decline, this issue will only be exacerbated.

²⁶ FY2012 estimates were calculated by the Department of Education as of April 3, 2012, and posted at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/index.html>.

Within State Competitive Versus Formula Funding

A long-standing issue in education grant making is whether formula or competitive grants are more appropriate to the policy and program purposes. Formula grant programs are noncompetitive awards often to predetermined entities based on a predetermined formula. Competitive grants are awarded based on a review of applications and other information, as applicable, to determine which applications best address the program requirements and are, therefore, most worthy of funding.

Relative to competitive funding, formula funding traditionally provides a more reliable funding source to eligible entities over time, which is considered good for program stability, but contributes to a greater reliance on federal funding. However, formula grants may be fairly small (only supplemental) given the number of eligible entities and participants. Competitive funding is said to spur innovation, to be less likely to foster program sustainability, and to be more likely to fund entities that already have the capacity to undertake the program. Of course, many of the traditional advantages and disadvantages of each funding mechanism can be reduced by adding extra funding specifications. For example, a competitive grant program can advantage prior grant recipients thus potentially reducing innovation and increasing the reliability of funding.

Some stakeholders, including the Obama Administration in its *Perkins Blueprint*, have recommended awarding funds competitively. Under the *Perkins Blueprint*, the federal government would award 10% of program funds competitively to states and require states to award all funds to local providers by competition. The Administration notes that this is expected to encourage innovation and labor market responsiveness, increase access to CTE programs by target groups—disadvantaged communities and student populations, and reward programs that meet or exceed performance expectations. Other stakeholders, including the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), contend that funds should continue to be distributed to local providers by formula to maximize overall access to CTE and that some amount of additional funds should be awarded through competitive grants aimed at encouraging innovation.²⁷

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²⁷ Association for Career and Technical Education, *Perkins Reauthorization: Guiding Principles*, Alexandria, VA, https://www.acteonline.org/uploadedFiles/Issues_and_Advocacy/files/ACTE_Perkins_Guiding_Principles.pdf.

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