

# Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

**Overview:** The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) supports secondary and postsecondary programs that build the academic, career, and technical skills of young people and adults. Perkins IV funds can be used to support critical components of career pathways initiatives, including curriculum development, program development, and support services. Federal funding is distributed through Title I of Perkins IV, which supports career and technical education (CTE) activities for both youth and adults. Funding for Title II of Perkins IV, which supports Tech Prep, was eliminated in 2011.

**Type of Program:** Formula grants to states, with state flexibility to determine the allocation of funds between secondary and postsecondary institutions. States must direct at least 85 percent of the funds to secondary and postsecondary institutions, which may include area career and technical education schools, technical colleges, and community colleges. The remaining 15 percent can fund state administrative and leadership activities.

**Eligibility and Targeting:** Institutions receiving Perkins IV funds must ensure access for special populations who face difficulty in attaining education and employment. Under the 2006 Act, special populations are defined as:

- Individuals with disabilities,
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children,
- Individuals preparing for nontraditional fields,
- Single parents, including single pregnant women,
- Displaced homemakers, and
- Individuals with limited English proficiency.

**Services/Program Support:** Perkins IV funds can be used to develop CTE programs and curricula, including a multiyear sequence of courses known as a program of study, develop programs for special populations, provide mentoring and support services for CTE participants, upgrade or adapt equipment designed to strengthen academic and technical skill achievement, and provide professional development opportunities to teachers, administrators, and counselors.

**Non-federal Funds:** States must maintain non-federal spending on career and technical education at the same level as in prior years. States also must match funds spent on state administrative (but not state leadership) activities, using non-federal sources.

### HOW PROGRAM CAN SUPPORT CAREER PATHWAYS AND CAREER PATHWAY BRIDGES

Perkins IV can support key components of career pathway initiatives and can be used to drive development of new pathways that lead to jobs in vital economic sectors. Funds also can be used for the initial development and support of the CTE components of career pathway bridge initiatives, typically in coordination with other funding sources.

The 2006 reauthorization of the legislation requires local recipients of funds to offer at least one program of study as an essential part of their CTE offerings. A program of study is a multiyear sequence of courses, similar to a well-defined career pathway, in a career and technical content area. The sequence:

- Must include academic and CTE content in a non-duplicative progression of courses,
- Must combine secondary and postsecondary program elements,
- May allow for dual or concurrent enrollment in a postsecondary program, and
- Must lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level or to an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Programs of study can be thought of as career pathways intended to move secondary students toward a postsecondary credential and/or the baccalaureate level. A program of study can be structured in different ways (e.g., as a component of a career cluster, a career academy, or a small learning community) and can have multiple entry points, including opportunities for adult learners.

Resources reserved as state leadership funds (10 percent of the total allocation) are required to fund selected activities, which include developing, improving, or expanding the use of technology in CTE; supporting partnerships among local institutions, adult education providers, and other entities; and providing professional development opportunities for CTE teachers and faculty. In addition to these required activities, allowable uses of these funds include supporting new CTE courses and initiatives, improving career guidance and academic

counseling, and developing and enhancing data systems so that states and institutions can track academic and employment outcomes for CTE students.

Perkins IV funds distributed to local institutions (85 percent of the total allocation) must be used for a range of activities, including the provision of activities that prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations; the development of quality CTE programs; and the enhanced use of technology in CTE programs. Local recipients may use funds for critical implementation activities, such as providing mentoring and support services, expanding flexible delivery formats to make CTE accessible to all students, and developing or improving CTE courses. Perkins IV funds also may be used to provide direct assistance, including dependent care, transportation, tuition, books, and supplies, if the assistance is delivered to members of special populations who need it to participate in CTE activities, if it is part of a larger set of strategies for special populations, and if it supplements what is otherwise available from non-federal sources.<sup>39</sup>

In **Washington**, Perkins leadership funds, along with Adult Basic Education funds, were instrumental in the development of I-BEST, a career pathway program for low-skilled and limited-English-proficient adults that contextualizes and integrates basic skills education with occupational training and results in college credit and an occupational certificate. Leadership funds supported 10 I-BEST demonstration projects in 2004-2006 and have been used over the years to support I-BEST professional development opportunities. In addition, the state has established expectations for all Perkins programs that include meeting the unique needs of adult learners by ensuring that course requirements and necessary skill sets required for obtaining entry into the workforce are well defined and understood.

**Ohio's** new five-year plan for Perkins IV includes the shift of 3 percent of Perkins Title I funding from secondary and postsecondary institutions to support activities geared toward supporting student success and improving a student's likelihood of earning a credential. The state intends for institutions to use this funding to identify

learning needs and provide appropriate interventions for students vulnerable to dropping out of high school and students who need assistance reentering the education system.

In **Illinois**, Lake Land College pioneered a unique partnership involving developmental education and occupational programs. An instructor developed a transportation bridge course that helps students who test into developmental reading and writing succeed in the college's for-credit, transportation certificate, and degree programs. Students concurrently enroll in this bridge course and the transportation occupational programs (e.g., automotive technology, agriculture power technology). The bridge course covers an introduction to the workplace, technical reading applications, industry certification expectations, reading requirement goals, and the use of work-based scenarios to practice appropriate listening, reading, and communication skills. The college's efforts were supported by the Illinois Shifting Gears Initiative.<sup>40</sup>

#### **PROGRAM LIMITATIONS**

- Although federal dollars may be used for the delivery of prerequisite courses, the 2006 legislation excludes funding for prerequisite courses that are remedial. Any course funded under Perkins IV also must meet all parts of the new definition of CTE.
- Although Perkins IV funds may be used to support the CTE component of a career pathway bridge initiative, additional federal, state, and local resources, such as adult education and literacy funds, must be used to provide basic skills instruction and other elements of the career pathway bridge initiative.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATES**

The flexibility under Perkins IV provides ample opportunities for states to create or expand career pathway and career pathway bridge initiatives, including:

- Align programs of study and overarching career clusters with the workforce and skill needs of regional employers.
- Use program approval authority to drive the development of programs of study and ensure access to the program for adults as well as young people.

- Collect outcome data for adults participating in CTE programs to track transitions to further education and training and into the labor market.
- In conjunction with other federal and state funds, use state leadership funds to initiate career pathway bridge initiatives.
- Use the authority under the reserve (which may consist of up to 10 percent of funds that are distributed to local institutions) to award grants to secondary and postsecondary institutions.
- Support partnerships involving local schools, postsecondary institutions, and adult education providers to focus on successful transitions, leading to the attainment of academic, career, and technical skills.