

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act WIOA-Alignment Recommendations

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) sits at a critical juncture between national, state, and local education and workforce development systems. The need for cross-system collaboration between these communities is more important than ever before, and one important step is to appropriately and effectively align the federal investments made through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Perkins. This alignment is critical given the increasingly complex education and training that is necessary for our nation's students to succeed in the 21st century economy.

To accomplish this, career and technical education (CTE) must strike the appropriate balance between the educational needs of students and the talent pipeline needs of employers. To that end, NASDCTEC and ACTE view the ongoing implementation of WIOA and the upcoming reauthorization of the Perkins Act as an important opportunity to build upon existing efforts to efficiently collaborate across these systems and to develop and strengthen mechanisms to further encourage this work.

Our legislative recommendations for the Perkins Act's renewal contain the following recommendations that will support the long-standing relationship between that law and the workforce system, while continuing to honor CTE's important role in our K-12 and postsecondary education systems.

- **Emphasizing student attainment of industry-recognized credentials:** The passage of WIOA created a new statutory definition for "recognized postsecondary credentials" that encompasses the full spectrum of degrees, certifications, and credentials available to students beyond a high school diploma—all currently recognized by the employer community. We therefore recommend as part of a Program of Study (POS) framework, that *all* Perkins-funded programs lead to student attainment of these credentials, which would reinforce the important work already underway with WIOA in this area. Moreover, our recommendations would hold states and local programs accountable for student attainment of these credentials on an annual basis and seek to increase these levels over time.
- **Coordinating with the Wagner-Peyser system:** Ensuring that CTE programs supported by Perkins meet the current needs of state and local employers, while simultaneously balancing that degree of labor market alignment with the potential longer-term needs of students, is an aspect of Perkins and WIOA alignment that requires a deft touch. An effective strategy for strengthening labor market alignment in the next iteration of Perkins is to ensure that state Perkins agencies are an end-consumer of the labor market information and analyses that are a product of the workforce and labor market information system established in Title III of WIOA. This will ensure that state Perkins agencies and local programs have the necessary information to ensure CTE programs have relevancy to state and local employment opportunities.
- **Engaging employers through sector strategies and partnerships:** One of the key innovations of WIOA is the law's emphasis on the creation and development of industry-led sector partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels. This is an effective mechanism for ensuring that the employer community has a *meaningful* level of input—and significant ownership—for program development and implementation. We recommend that where these partnerships exist, they should be leveraged to inform the development and implementation of CTE POS.

- **Complimenting Career Pathways with CTE POS:** The concept of career pathways (i.e. coordinating various education and training programs to meet the needs of a particular group or an individual) has been in existence for some time. WIOA formalized a definition for career pathways that has much in common with a CTE POS—an important innovation that stems from current Perkins law that we recommend be expanded in the upcoming reauthorization. There are however important differences between the two concepts and where possible, work to develop and implement either should be done in a coordinated fashion. Put simply, CTE POS can be an effective delivery mechanism for the education portion of a career pathway. Our legislative recommendations therefore *compliment* the work being done on career pathways within the workforce community via Perkins state and local plan development and uses of funds requirements.
- **Combined State planning options:** WIOA stresses the importance of developing a statewide strategic vision for workforce development. This strategic vision can be an important contribution to a state’s Perkins planning as well. In order to make the most of this opportunity, our legislative recommendations incorporate a combined state planning option for Perkins’ participation in a WIOA combined state plan, which emphasizes several key areas for joint planning and cross-system coordination. However, the decision should ultimately be left for states to decide, based on their unique governance and programming needs.
- **Interfacing with workforce boards and stakeholders:** Although WIOA currently lacks required representation of the CTE community on local and state workforce development boards (WDBs), we acknowledge and seek to strengthen the important contributions and insights that these stakeholders can bring to bear for the development of state and local Perkins plans. Direct engagement with WIOA’s WDBs throughout the development and implementation of these Perkins plans are therefore a core component of our legislative recommendations.
- **Aligning data systems, definitions, and performance negotiations:** The creation of common performance metrics for all core WIOA programs is a key component of the new law. Our legislative recommendations for the next iteration of Perkins similarly call for more streamlined metrics to hold CTE programs and states accountable for student achievement and outcomes. These proposed metrics are more appropriate for CTE programs given their dual responsibilities both for education and job-training. As such, they are aligned to WIOA’s six core indicators of performance where appropriate in a way that ensures that data definitions and systems are being used to create efficiencies and reduce administrative burden within and across workforce and education reporting systems. Further, we recommend that states have the option to use an objective statistical adjustment model as used in WIOA for the purposes of negotiating performance targets, and that states use UI wage records to report on employment information as in the WIOA system consistent with state law.

Should you have any questions related to these recommendations, please contact Steve Voytek, NASDCTEC’s Government Relations Manager (svoytek@careertech.org) or Alisha Hyslop, ACTE’s Public Policy Director (AHyslop@acteonline.org).