

Introduction

Some of the most significant changes under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) revolve around a much clearer and expanded emphasis on equity and access, moving beyond the historic focus of gender equity. The law now embraces equity as a central construct of CTE delivery and infuses it within nearly every aspect of Perkins V — from planning, uses of funds and stakeholder engagement to accountability and reporting. Here is an overview of equity-related changes between Perkins IV and V:

Expanded definition of special populations

Perkins has a long history of supporting learners identified as a special population. Perkins V builds upon the prior definition for special populations, which included individuals with disabilities, individuals from economically disadvantaged families, individuals preparing for non-traditional fields, single parents, out-of-work individuals, English learners, and added three new populations:

- Homeless individuals;
- Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system and
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces.

Changes in funding

New to Perkins V is a set-aside from the state leadership funds that requires states to allocate at least 0.1 percent or \$50,000, for recruiting special populations into CTE programs and increased the cap for funding for serving individuals in state institutions from 1% to 2%. The non-traditional training set aside, with a range of \$60,000 - \$150,000 remains in effect.

Changes in stakeholder engagement

Perkins V significantly expanded stakeholder engagement by requiring a more robust list of stakeholders and assigning the stakeholders more responsibilities, as well as requiring engagement with stakeholders to be ongoing. Stakeholders are required to give input into the state plan development, setting the state's secondary quality indicator and perhaps most notably as partners in the new [comprehensive local needs assessment \(CLNA\)](#). The purpose of the CLNA is to support data-driven decision making and more closely align planning, spending and accountability activities under Perkins V. The results of the CLNA must form the foundation of the local applications and drive local spending decisions. The CLNA process requires local Perkins eligible recipients to direct resources towards programs and programs of study that lead to high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupations and activities that address equity and opportunity gaps.

An Overview of How Equity Appears in State Plans

Closing equity gaps and addressing the individualized needs of each learner are major priorities in many states' Perkins V plans. States have structured their plans around several strategies aimed at closing equity gaps.

The most common state strategies are:

- Provision of targeted technical assistance (82 percent of states or 42 total),
- Professional development to support efforts to close equity gaps at the state and local levels (80 percent of states or 40 total)
- Utilization of the CLNA and/or local application (66 percent of states or 30 total).

With regards to state-level funding, 69 percent of states (35 total) are using more than the required set-asides of their state leadership funding to close equity gaps, and more than one-third of states (19 total) indicate that they are using some of their reserve fund for similar purposes. About two-thirds of states (32 total) are setting aside at least 1 percent of their funds to support CTE programs at state institutions, such as juvenile justice facilities, adult corrections institutions and educational institutions that serve individuals with disabilities. At least seven states are dedicating the maximum 2 percent allowed under law.

Seventy-one percent of states (36 total) are dedicating \$60,000 to the non-trad set aside and only 12 percent of states (6 total) are dedicating the maximum. To learn more about advancing equity in state plans, view the full report on [*The State of CTE: An Analysis of States' Perkins V Priorities*](#).

Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement in Maryland

Maryland mapped out several ways that it will continue to engage stakeholders throughout implementation of its Perkins V plan. The state has an Interagency Agreement to support interagency transition coordination (IATC) for students with disabilities among nine entities that together represent learners, educators, families and advocates. The IATC's purpose is to help improve the policies and practices that affect Maryland students with disabilities preparing to transition from high school to adult services, college, employment and independent living. They meet quarterly to create and review an Interagency State Plan for Transitioning Youth with Disabilities, as well as provide resources and best practices for individuals and their families through targeted workshops and statewide conferences. To help ensure equal access for special populations through Perkins V, Maryland's local school systems and community colleges braid funding streams where appropriate with other Maryland State Department of Education Divisions to support high school and postsecondary CTE students, address barriers and challenges that may exist and prevent students from participating in after school internships and provide career information and related career development and advisement services in order to ensure the selection of appropriate CTE programs.

Maryland continues to engage stakeholders through its statewide CTE Advisory Committee, which is charged with providing strategic guidance and direction for the state's CTE system.

In addition, Maryland continues to engage stakeholders through its Statewide CTE Advisory Committee, which is charged with providing strategic guidance and direction for the state's CTE system. This Advisory Committee is led by the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education and consist of stakeholders representing workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, economic development leaders, the Maryland Department of Labor, local school systems, institutions of higher education, special population groups and families. These efforts are mirrored at the local

level, and the state is providing substantial guidance and support for local advisory committees that provide similar feedback to local CTE programs.

Rhode Island Proactively Planned Innovation and Equity Grants

In 2018, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) started the process of piloting CTE Innovation and Equity Grants by awarding nearly \$1.2 million in funds to new and existing programs to help expand access for historically underserved learners. The eight recipient schools were spread across the state and each received roughly \$150,000 in funding over two years for planning and implementation. The state was aware of the possibility of the reauthorization of Perkins and wanted to ensure fidelity in their funding models through piloting the equity grant process prior so that the program would be created in time to be formalized in the state plan.

Rhode Island then chose equity grants as one of the uses of its Perkins V reserve fund. This was in part due to a deep dive analysis into the state's data, which showed the aggregate numbers for CTE being aligned to the state's population, even when narrowing by race and gender. However, when the state looked at the data by Career Cluster®, the gaps presented themselves. There were significant gaps in the demographics of students who completed Rhode Island programs, including a 27 percent gap for women in Information Technology (IT), a 27 percent gap for students of color in business, enrolled in programs in high-wage, high-demand sectors and a 26 percent gap for low-income students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), for example. To reverse this trend, the equity grants were implemented as one piece of PrepareRI, Rhode Island's cross-agency college and career readiness initiative. Some examples of program proposals funded through the equity grants include women in IT, students with disabilities in environmental science, English language learners in healthcare and students of color in finance.

The equity grants being embedded into the state's Perkins state plan ensures that they continue, even if leadership and/or administration changes. As the first round of equity grants come to an end, lessons learned will be gathered and shared via a clearinghouse for other districts to use as models for replication.

The equity grants being embedded into the Rhode Island's Perkins state plan ensures that they continue, even if leadership and/or administration changes.

Looking Ahead

Perkins V provided states with both incentives and requirements to more deliberately center equity in their state plan. While the first year of Perkins implementation has been significantly impacted by the global pandemic, it also shone a light on deep, systemic inequities that have long existed but been unattended to or made worse because of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and its related economic downturn. This past year has made this work – to ensure equitable access, support and success in CTE programs – even more urgent and important. Perkins V's emphasis on equity is a resounding step forward but it is up to the states and local communities to leverage the law's incentives and requirements to boldly lead to ensure that every learner can access and find success in CTE without limits.