



## INTRODUCTION

# MAXIMIZING ACCESS AND SUCCESS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

## in Career Technical Education

Among the most critical elements of the federal law governing Career Technical Education (CTE), the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V), are the provisions in the law that prioritize expanding access to and supporting success within CTE programs for the following nine special populations:

### SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V

#### LEARNER GROUPS DEFINED AS SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V:

- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals with disabilities
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Youth who are in/have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals preparing for careers that are non-traditional for their gender
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, ex. low-income youth and adults

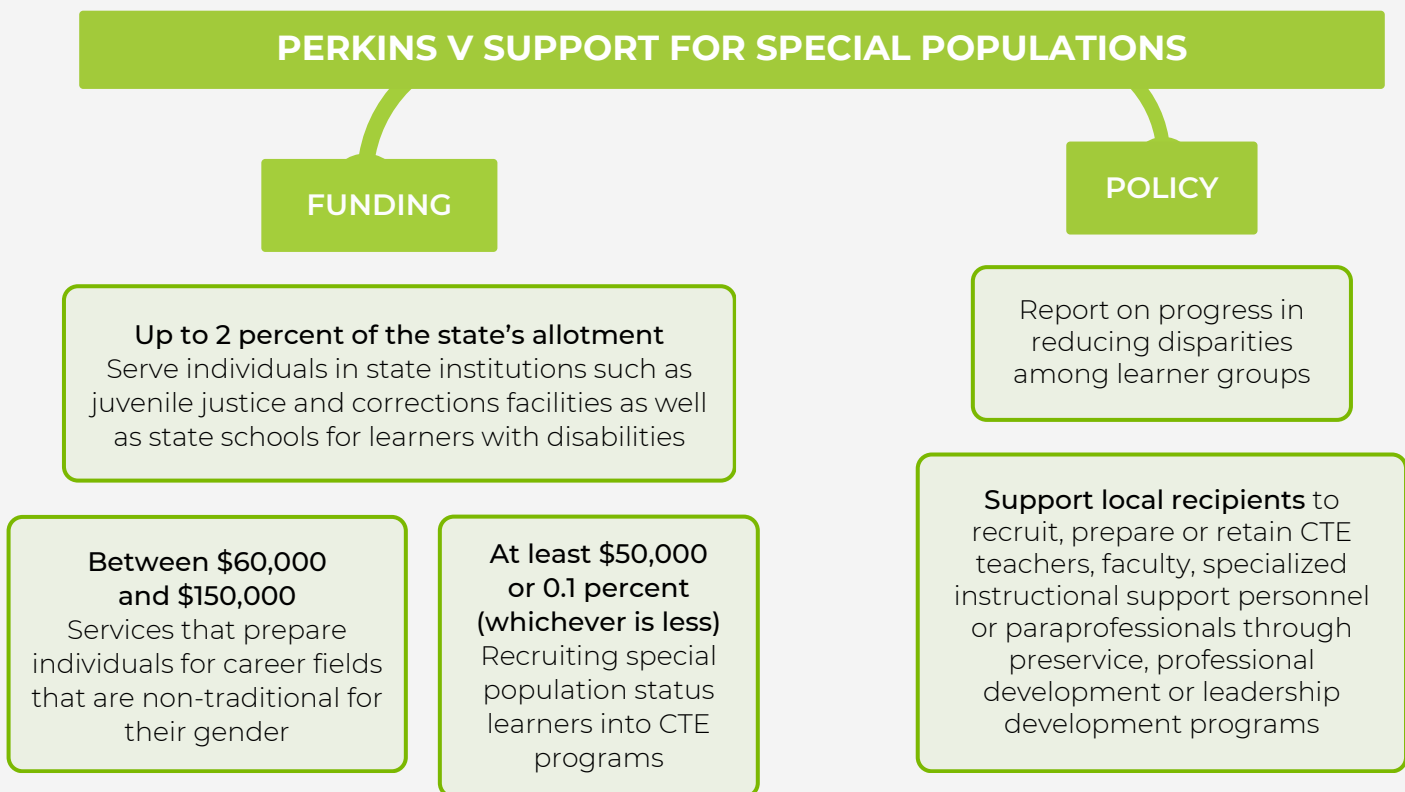
*CTE educators are developing strategies to support learner groups who, while not special populations under the law, may need additional supports, including **migrant and undocumented, LGBTQ+ and justice-involved learners**.*

This brief introduces the Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations in Career Technical Education series, a collection of briefs from Advance CTE and the Association for Career and Technical Education that will explore strategies for supporting each of the nine special populations as defined by Perkins V as well as learner groups who, while not special populations under the law, may need additional supports to enroll and succeed in CTE.

## PERKINS V AND SPECIAL POPULATIONS

A number of provisions in Perkins V relate to these nine special populations. For accountability and reporting, data must be disaggregated to show the number of CTE participants; the number of CTE concentrators; and performance on each of the accountability measures for each special population group as well as by gender, race/ethnicity and migrant status (data for this last group is reported only on the secondary level in alignment with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). In addition, state and local recipients are both required to consult representatives of special populations for state planning and for the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment.

States may keep up to 10 percent of their Perkins V allotment to support state leadership activities. Among the uses for this funding stream are three required set-asides and other requirements that relate to special populations. States must:



States are also permitted to spend state leadership funding in ways that affect all learners, including special populations, by developing and improving programs of study, facilitating credential attainment, supporting work-based learning, providing career guidance and more. In addition to these more general uses, several permitted uses of state leadership funding refer to special populations directly.

## PERMITTED STATE USES TO SUPPORT SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- Supporting local recipients in eliminating inequities in student access to high-quality programs of study, including access to specialized instructional support personnel;
- Awarding incentive grants to local recipients, which may be based on closing achievement gaps for special populations;
- Supporting Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), especially with respect to efforts to increase the participation of students who are members of special populations; and
- Supporting programs and activities that increase access, student engagement and success in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), particularly for students who are members of groups that are under-represented in these fields.

On the local level, grant recipients are similarly permitted to use funds in ways that can benefit all learners, such as to support professional development, high-quality programs of study, career guidance and more.

## PERMITTED LOCAL RECIPIENT USE TO SUPPORT SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- Providing professional development to support the implementation of strategies to improve student achievement and close gaps in student participation and performance in CTE programs;
- Supporting programs and activities that increase access to and student engagement and success in STEM for students who are members of groups that are under-represented in such subject fields; and
- Reducing or eliminating out-of-pocket expenses for special populations participating in CTE, including those participating in dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high school programs, and helping defray the costs associated with fees, transportation, child care or mobility challenges for those special populations.

Finally, Perkins V includes a new Government Accountability Office study to evaluate the strategies, components, policies and practices used to ensure that all learners, including specific subpopulations, are able to pursue and complete CTE programs of study aligned to high-skill, high-wage occupations. A special focus is to be placed on populations that are under-represented in such occupations.

## PROVISIONS FOR PARTICULAR LEARNER GROUPS

Beyond these provisions that apply to all special populations, the law contains additional language relevant to specific special populations.

### *Non-traditional Learners*

Non-traditional learners — learners who are enrolled in CTE programs that are preparing them for career fields that are non-traditional for their gender — are the only special population with their own accountability indicator. Non-traditional program concentration is defined as the percentage of CTE concentrators of one gender enrolled in CTE programs that lead to occupations in which individuals from that gender comprise less than 25 percent of those employed.



Non-traditional learners are also the only special population with a dedicated funding stream; as noted earlier, states must set aside between \$60,000 and \$150,000 for services that prepare individuals for career fields that are non-traditional for their gender.

In addition, local recipients are permitted to spend their funds on providing introductory courses or activities focused on career exploration and awareness, including non-traditional fields, and supporting CTSOs, particularly in regard to increasing the participation of non-traditional learners.

## ***Learners with Disabilities***

On the state level, supporting CTE programs at state schools that are dedicated to serving learners with disabilities is one option for spending the institutional set-aside within state leadership funding.

On the local level, recipients are permitted to spend local funding on training teachers, faculty, school leaders, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, career guidance and academic counselors, and paraprofessionals to provide appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities and to use frameworks to effectively teach learners, including a particular focus on learners with disabilities.

Local recipients are also permitted to use funds to coordinate with other education and workforce development programs and initiatives, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## ***English Learners***

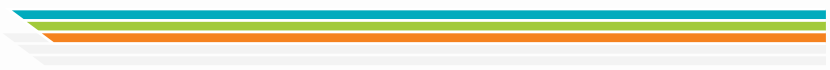
Local funding can be spent on training teachers, faculty, school leaders, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, career guidance and academic counselors, and paraprofessionals to use frameworks to effectively teach learners, including English learners.

## ***Justice-Involved Learners***

The institutional set-aside within state leadership funding described previously may be and frequently is directed toward supporting CTE programs at facilities for adult or juvenile justice-involved learners.

## **CONCLUSION**

Recruiting and supporting special populations in CTE programs is an expressed purpose in the Perkins V legislation, and the law provides significant resources for state and local leaders to support these activities. The remaining briefs in this series will describe strategies for supporting each of these special populations as well as other underserved learner groups such as migrant and undocumented learners, LGBTQ+ learners and justice-involved learners.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*For additional resources, visit the [Perkins V Section](#) and the [Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations in Career Technical Education series page](#) in the Learning that Works Resource Center*

