



Supporting Out-of-Workforce Individuals in Career Technical Education

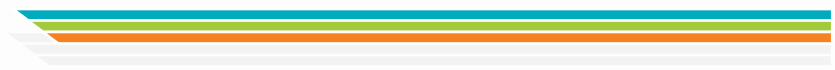
Career Technical Education (CTE) policies and programs have increasingly focused on supporting the needs of historically marginalized learners and closing access and performance gaps among learner groups. Perkins V, the latest iteration of federal CTE legislation known as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, is part of this trend. The law defines nine learner groups as special populations and includes a number of provisions that address expanding access to and supporting success within CTE programs for special populations. This brief will describe strategies for supporting one of these special populations: out-of-workforce individuals.

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+, justice-involved and Tribal learners.



DEFINING OUT-OF-WORKFORCE INDIVIDUALS

Out-of-workforce individuals are defined in Perkins V as meeting one of the following criteria:

- A person who has primarily worked without pay caring for family members, who is unemployed or underemployed, and who is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment;
- A person whose youngest dependent will become ineligible for services under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program within two years, who is unemployed or underemployed, and who is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment; or
- A displaced homemaker, which is defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as a person who has worked without pay caring for family members, who has been dependent on another family member's income or is the spouse of a military servicemember, who is unemployed or underemployed, and who is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment. *Note: this term was replaced with out-of-workforce individual in Perkins when the law was reauthorized in 2018.*

One of the eight stated purposes of Perkins V legislation is to increase “employment opportunities for populations who are chronically unemployed or underemployed,” with “out-of-workforce individuals” specifically noted.

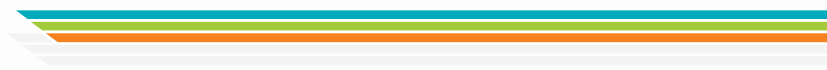
STRATEGIES FOR OUT-OF-WORKFORCE INDIVIDUALS

Out-of-workforce individuals — referred to as displaced homemakers in prior iterations of the law — have long been identified within CTE as a population of interest. The disruption to the workforce resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, particularly for women and caregivers, has only made strategies to support these learners more relevant.¹ Potential state (🏛️) and local (📍) approaches include:

Cross-agency coordination and partnerships 🏛️ 📍

On the state and local levels, CTE agencies and departments can coordinate with workforce development agencies, American Job Centers, employer groups and labor unions to understand the causes of unemployment, workforce needs and career opportunities for out-of-workforce individuals.

¹ Penn Today. (2023). How have women in the workforce fared, three years into the pandemic? <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/how-have-women-workforce-fared-three-years-pandemic>



Flexible and accelerated learning 🏛️ 📍

State and local policies can enable out-of-workforce individuals to earn credit for prior learning and work experiences and to take part in competency-based models that allow them to progress at a pace that meets their needs. CTE courses can also be offered in multiple formats, including fully online and hybrid in-person and online options.



Coordination of supports across special populations 🏛️ 📍

Many learners qualify under multiple special population designations. Out-of-workforce individuals may also be English learners or may need to gain basic skills. On the state and local levels, CTE professionals can coordinate with adult education providers as well as agencies and staff who support English learners to deliver coordinated, comprehensive programming and supports.

Work-based learning and job placement 📍

Local CTE programs that serve postsecondary and adult learners can prioritize paid experiential learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships, that help out-of-workforce individuals develop skills and network with potential employers. In addition, they can host career fairs, help learners with job applications and resumes, and recruit employer partners to take part in mock interviews. States can incentivize and support these opportunities through policies, funding and professional development.

Supportive services 📍

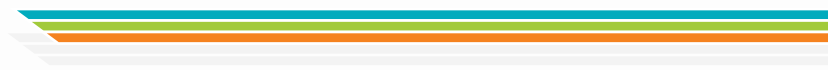
Out-of-workforce individuals may benefit from supports such as campus-based child care, a food pantry, or a dress for success closet that provides free professional clothes for job interviews. Regional and local networks of counselors, student support specialists and other campus staff can sustainably assist out-of-workforce individuals with these needs. States can facilitate this effort by enabling local recipients to financially support learners with tangible needs, which is an allowable use of funds under Perkins or can be covered by other federal or state funding streams.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The strategies described above are not mutually exclusive and not all will be appropriate based on the needs of your out-of-workforce population. Before enacting new strategies, assess the current state of out-of-workforce individuals in your CTE programs and dig into root causes of barriers and challenges:

- What do out-of-workforce individuals tell you about their needs, challenges and successes?
- What does your data show about the CTE participation and concentration of out-of-workforce individuals?
- What does your data show about the performance of out-of-workforce individuals?
- How do you encourage out-of-workforce individuals to self-disclose their status so they can be eligible for services?
- What paid work-based learning experiences and job placement services are available to out-of-workforce individuals, among other populations?
- What policies award credit for prior learning and work experiences to out-of-workforce individuals, among other populations?
- What flexible delivery models support out-of-workforce individuals and other learners to move through education at their own pace?
- What support services are available for out-of-workforce individuals? How are they made aware of these services?
- Which agencies or community organizations could you connect with to support out-of-workforce individuals?

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



CASE STUDY

The [Pathways to Healthcare Program](#), a partnership between Pima Community College and Pima County One Stop in Arizona, leveraged a five-year U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Professional Opportunity Grant to map 16 existing training programs to five career pathways, creating ladders with stackable credentials. The supports included a compressed bridge program to provide basic skills to those who needed them as well as proactive guidance and advising, scholarships and supports for entering employment. Most participants were women, with 68 percent receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Women, Infants and Children program benefits.

Findings demonstrate that the program increased participants' hours in postsecondary occupational training, more than doubled the proportion of participants earning a postsecondary credential, and significantly increased the percentage earning an industry certification or license. Individuals in the treatment group also reported favorably about their career progress and their access to career supports. While this program was funded by HHS, many of the strategies embedded are permissible uses of funding under Perkins V or WIOA.



RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OUT-OF-WORKFORCE INDIVIDUALS

- **Here to Stay: Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina Women in Construction Trades Apprenticeships and Employment** (Chicago Women in Trades National Center for Women's Equity in Apprenticeship and Employment, June 2021)
- **Accelerating Recovery Through Credentials: Rapid Response Toolkit** (Education Strategy Group, 2020)
- **What Works for Adult Learners: Lessons From Career Pathway Evaluations** (JFF, July 2019)
- **Supportive Services in Job Training and Education: A Research Review** (Institute for Women's Policy Research, March 2016)
- **Supporting Out-of-Workforce Individuals: Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies** (Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support, Illinois State University)

