

Leveraging Federal Investments to Advance CTE Without Limits

Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education (CTE Without Limits), developed by Advance CTE and supported by an additional 40 national organizations, puts forth a bold vision for a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem that will close equity gaps in educational outcomes and workforce readiness and leverage Career Technical Education (CTE) as a catalyst for ensuring that each learner can reach success in the career of their choice.

To fully realize a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem, state leaders can and should work across state systems to align federal and state talent pipeline investments and overall strategies. These funding streams include but are not limited to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Higher Education Act (HEA). Leveraging and focusing the combined influence of these assets will increase a state's ability to provide the full continuum of learners access to equitable, skills-based education and preparation for the ever-evolving future of work.

CTE Without Limits lays out five inter-connected and equally critical principles:



Each learner engages in a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem.



Each learner feels welcome in, is supported by and has the means to succeed in the career preparation ecosystem.



Each learner skillfully navigates their own career journey.



Each learner's skills are counted, valued and portable.



Each learner can access CTE without borders.

Aligning and Leveraging Federal Investments

CTE Without Limits outlines specific actions state and local leaders can take to advance CTE and responsive career preparation ecosystems. This document highlights examples of strategic connections among the five principles and existing allowable activities in Perkins V, WIOA, ESSA and HEA.

Each strategic connection includes the legislative reference and a brief description of action that can be taken to leverage the specified funding stream in support of the related principle. Please note that the examples provided are not meant to include all opportunities but rather are exemplars to foster conversations between state agencies to realize the promise of a shared vision for CTE.

Principle 1: Each Learner Engages in a Cohesive, Flexible and Responsive Career Preparation Ecosystem

Perkins V Reserve Fund¹ — Perkins V provided states greater flexibility on the use of Reserve Funds for grants to foster innovation and address performance and opportunity gaps. States can employ this flexibility to issue Reserve Fund grants targeted at supporting responsive career pathways and closing inequitable funding gaps.

WIOA Governor’s Reserve Fund² — WIOA allows governors to reserve not more than 15 percent of funds received for statewide workforce investment activities. States have the potential to align WIOA Governor’s Reserve Fund and Perkins V Reserve Fund competitions to invest in a shared statewide commitment to cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem complete with aligned and integrated programs of study and career pathways.

ESSA Statewide Accountability System³ — ESSA’s accountability system includes levers (i.e., the school quality and student success indicators) that can drive investment and innovation toward a collaborative, equitable and innovative career preparation ecosystem. States are encouraged to continue to review and iterate indicators in their accountability systems and review what and how they are publicly reporting on measures of college and career readiness to support a robust system of career preparation.

HEA TRIO and GEAR UP⁴ — Because TRIO and GEAR UP serve learners from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, state CTE leaders can leverage this expertise and partner to expand equitable and flexible programs of study and career pathways.

HEA Federal Work Study⁵ — In the Federal Work Study section of HEA, Congress clearly defined that one of the purposes of the program is to “promote the work-learning-service experience as a tool of postsecondary education.” State leaders should work with higher education institutions to establish robust career-related internship opportunities for qualifying learners and provide training for employers to build their cultural competency as they interact with this diverse group of learners.

¹ Perkins V Section 112(c)

² WIOA Section 128(a)(1)

³ ESSA Section 1111(c)

⁴ HEA Section 403 and Section 404

⁵ HEA Title IV, Part C

Principle 2: Each Learner Feels Welcome in, Is Supported by and Has the Means to Succeed in the Career Preparation Ecosystem

Local Application and Methods of Administration (MOA)⁶ — State leaders can leverage Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment and MOA activities to advance equity audits, build cultural competence, and engage under-represented and marginalized learner/community voices.

WIOA Youth and Vocational Rehabilitation⁷ — State CTE leaders should collaborate with statewide vocational rehabilitation and WIOA youth offices to pilot demonstration projects designed on the margin to meet the education and employment needs of the learners who have the most barriers to access and success.

ESSA Preparing, Training and Recruiting Teachers⁸ — Title II has significant resources to diversify the teacher pipeline. To connect this work to CTE, state CTE leaders can work with the Title II state leader(s) to develop and fund a joint project to attract and train diverse CTE instructors and administrators. Title II funds could also be leveraged locally to provide pre-service and in-service professional development on culturally responsive and globally competent teaching methods.

Principle 3: Each Learner Skillfully Navigates Their Own Career Journey

Perkins V State Leadership Funds⁹ — While a variety of uses for Perkins State Leadership funds are permissible, states could lead a collaborative investment (WIOA, ESSA and HEA) to develop or knit together a statewide preK-20W career advisement system.

WIOA Labor Market Information¹⁰ — One of the duties of the state agency receiving funds under the Wagner-Peyser section of WIOA is to consult with the Perkins V eligible agency to meet the needs of secondary and postsecondary students who seek such information and annually inform the development and implementation of programs of study. State CTE leaders should use this consultation opportunity to expand and improve upon labor market information systems, providing learners with more transparent, reliable and real-time information on career opportunities, earnings, and how their educational decisions will affect their access to support services.

The **Washington State** Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board created [Career Bridge](#) as Washington's one-stop source for career and education planning. With the collaboration of multiple state agencies, the site allows the full continuum of learners to explore careers, view job trends and find education.

WIOA Waiver Authority¹¹ — Under WIOA the secretary of labor has the authority to grant waivers for statutory and regulatory requirements. States have been successful in seeking waivers from the WIOA youth out-of-school vs. in-school funding requirements. Waivers allow greater use of WIOA youth funds to support expanded career navigation for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

⁶ Perkins V Section 134(c) and Methods of Administration Guidelines for Vocational Education

⁷ WIOA Title I, Section 129(b)(2) and Section 415

⁸ ESSA Title II, Section 2002

⁹ Perkins V Section 124(b)(13)

¹⁰ WIOA Title III, Section 308

¹¹ WIOA Title I, Section 189

ESSA Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants¹² — The 21st Century Schools section of ESSA explicitly allows funds to be used for “training counselors to effectively use labor market information in assisting students with postsecondary education and career planning.” Such an investment would equip counselors to both understand and communicate the data to learners and other stakeholders.

Principle 4: Each Learner’s Skills Are Counted, Valued and Portable

Two- and four-year faculty and administrators from across **Colorado** came together in 2018 to propose changes to the credit for prior learning policy established in 2015 that guaranteed acceptance of credits earned through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams and course challenge options when a learner transferred. This group advocated for the inclusion of prior learning assessments such as the College Level Examination Program, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests and portfolio reviews in the transfer agreement. For more information and additional state examples, check out [Developing Credit for Prior Learning Policies to Support Postsecondary Attainment for Every Learner](#).

Perkins V State Leadership Activities¹³ — States CTE Agencies can invest collaboratively with other state agencies to create a shared, accurate and curated list of credentials of value that is applicable across learner levels. Creating this shared list will enable, value and focus the skilling and upskilling of learners.

WIOA Uses of Funds¹⁴ — WIOA includes in the allowable uses of state employment and training activities funds the “development or identification of education and training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, that utilize direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure and provide credit for prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability, that ensure credits are portable and stackable for more skilled employment, and that accelerate course or credential completion.” States should consider a combined investment in the rapid expansion of systemic, statewide credit for prior learning with a focus on portability and stackability.

ESSA Defining Student Success¹⁵ — ESSA provided new flexibility to states to shape a definition of student success. Included in that flexibility is the opportunity for states to advance a learner-centric, competency-based agenda in accountability and school improvement plans.

¹² ESSA Title IV, Section 4107

¹³ Perkins V Section 124(b)(8)(A)

¹⁴ WIOA Title I, Section 134

¹⁵ ESSA Title I

Principle 5: Each Learner Can Access CTE Without Borders

Perkins V State Leadership and Reserve Funds¹⁶ — States can use the State Leadership funds and Reserve Fund flexibility to break down the barriers that limit access and opportunities for learners. Targeting Reserve Fund grants to spur development of virtual CTE programs will incentivize the development of next-generation technology solutions such as augmented and virtual reality learning simulators and potentially cross-state collaborative course offerings.

WIOA State Flexibility¹⁷ — WIOA clearly includes a provision allowing inter-state collaboration and investment through compacts and cooperative agreements. Similar activity is not prohibited by Perkins V. States should build on existing inter-state collaborative efforts to enable the flow of learners, data, instructors, credits and credentials across state lines.

ESSA Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant¹⁸ — The purpose of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program is to provide all students a well-rounded education. With the use of technology as a core driver of success, this is a perfect place to leverage ESSA funding to create a borderless learning environment. States could use these funds to provide virtual access to CTE programming and work-based learning experiences beyond the learner's community.

HEA Revised Regulations¹⁹ — With the recent revisions to the HEA regulations on distance and competency-based education, the opportunity exists to advance research and program development to ensure that virtual opportunities are quality, equitable and widely accessible

State Support

Reach out to Advance CTE for support brainstorming additional ideas on how to leverage federal policies and funding streams to advance the vision.

Explore the Vision

These actions represent just a handful of steps state leaders can take to leverage federal investments to ensure that CTE programs and experiences are meaningful for learners and responsive to industry needs. The vision is ambitious and cannot be achieved without cross-agency collaboration.

To read the full vision, access additional resources and sign up to stay engaged, please visit www.careertech.org/without-limits.

¹⁶ Perkins V Section 124(b)(13) and Section 112(c)

¹⁷ WIOA Section 191

¹⁸ ESSA Title IV, Section 4101

¹⁹ HEA Institutional Eligibility Regulations issued under the Higher Education Act of 1965