Maximizing Perkins V's
Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment & Local Application to Drive CTE Program Quality and Equity

A Guide for Local Leaders

One of the most significant changes in Perkins V (the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act) is the new requirement for local eligible recipients to conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment and update it at least every two years.

The new needs assessment is designed as the foundation of Perkins V implementation at the local level—it drives your local application development and future spending decisions. This process should be seen as a chance to take an in-depth look at your entire local CTE system and identify areas where targeted improvements can lead to increased opportunities for student success. The needs assessment, if implemented thoughtfully, can also be a powerful opportunity to engage stakeholders in a common understanding and vision for the future of CTE in your community.

To implement the local needs assessment, you must evaluate, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, how your overall CTE offerings measure up on:
- Performance on federal accountability indicators
- Alignment to labor market needs
- Scope, size and quality of programs offered
- Progress toward implementing programs and programs of study
- Recruitment, retention and training of faculty and staff
- Progress toward improving access and equity

This tool will provide an overview of how to get started on your local needs assessment and help you translate the language in the law into concrete, actionable steps for conducting a rigorous local needs assessment that meets Perkins V requirements. It will also provide tips to help you ensure that your needs assessment is not an exercise in compliance, but a valuable tool for program improvement, founded on meaningful, regular, data-driven consultation with stakeholders that drives program quality and equity.

State Role

During the Perkins V implementation process, states will be developing guidance around the local needs assessment. This guidance may include state goals and benchmarks that must be addressed, as well as requirements for presenting and submitting findings and incorporating results into your local application. Some states will even create specific forma to be used for various parts of the process, so it is important to pay close attention to state requirements and consult with your state CTE agency before beginning any specific work on your local needs assessment.

In addition, your state may have developed, or be in the midst of developing, technical assistance, processes for accessing and sharing data, and plans for coordinated stakeholder engagement that will facilitate state goals and help local recipients achieve consistency in comprehensive needs assessment implementation across districts. This coordinated engagement could include key players in a career pathways system or sector partnership, as well as alignment with needs assessments required for the Every Student Succeeds Act (the most recent iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)) and for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), among other federal and state policies. In addition, states may facilitate collaboration among local recipients, or allow locals to drive intrastate regional approaches to the local needs assessment through consortia or other partnerships.

Your state will also be developing or updating key definitions relevant to the comprehensive needs assessment language in Perkins V, particularly definitions for "size," "scope" and "quality," as well as definitions for accountability indicators and other terms in the legislation that may be relevant. Finally, specific deadlines for completion of the local needs assessment and submission of the local application will be set by your state CTE eligible agency, and may be different from state to state.

For further guidance on the role your state may play in guiding and facilitating comprehensive needs assessment, read Advance CTE's brief, "Maximizing the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment & Local Application to Drive Quality and Equity in CTE."

Making the Needs Assessment Work for You

While the needs assessment process may seem daunting at first, it is important to keep in mind that you can leverage this process to work within your local context. Using your local goals to guide the process, as described in the next section, will help to ensure the outcomes will be valuable in driving CTE program improvement in your community, without creating tremendous new administrative burden.

One way to make the needs assessment work for you it to consult other federal program representatives in your community (such as those responsible for implementation of ESEA and WIOA) to gain ideas and best practices related to how they have approached their required needs assessments.

You can also leverage many activities in which you are already engaged in order to build the needs assessment. The information collection and consultation activities for the assessment do not have to be new or different from what you may already be doing. The data you collect, the relationships you have formed with industry and community partners, and the processes you engage in for curriculum development and revision and program approval are all relevant foundation for the needs assessment. The key difference in Perkins V is that all of these pieces are pulled together strategically and intentionally to help you plan for the future!

In addition, the needs assessment can be scaled to fit your particular context. In the sections that follow, we discuss a wide array of action items and provide numerous questions to help you think through the process. However, it is not likely that every single one of these questions or activities will be appropriate to your local area. Use this tool to draw ideas, and within the overarching state and federal requirements, pick the pieces that work best for you. The needs assessment process may look very different in smaller or more resource-limited local areas than in more populated areas with larger numbers of potential partners and employers.

Ultimately, the local needs assessment process is about helping you make a more formal shift from collecting data to using data to ensure your local CTE programs help create success for students and employers. The activities of

the local needs assessment should become a regular part of your overall district's or institution's data-driven decision making and program improvement cycles—not merely an additional activity every two years. By fully integrating this new Perkins V needs assessment into routine activities, you will be able to realize the full value of the process.

Getting Started: Foundations of a Rigorous Assessment Process

As you embark on this shift toward a focus on using data more strategically, the following four steps will help you lay the groundwork for a rigorous needs assessment process through clear goals, preparation and organization.

1. ### Determine Local Goals
   In addition to any state goals and requirements that must be integrated into the needs assessment, consider local priorities that should shape your work. For example, developing a process for program justification, increasing the number of your students earning industry certifications, strengthening industry advisory board engagement or closing equity gaps are goals that could align with the needs assessment and the local application. If you have already established a strategic plan or "vision" for your local CTE programs and supports, it is important to use the needs assessment to further those goals. If you don't already have a set of strategic priorities, the needs assessment may be a way to help identify those for the future.

2. ### Identify Stakeholders and a Leadership Team
   Consultation with "a diverse body of stakeholders" is at the heart of ensuring a rigorous and meaningful needs assessment process. The law names, at a minimum, the following participants who should engage in the initial needs assessment, local application development and ongoing consultation:
   - CTE program representatives at the secondary and postsecondary levels, including teachers, faculty, administrators, career guidance and advisement professionals, and other staff
   - State or local workforce development board representatives
   - Representatives from a range of local businesses and industries
   - Parents and students
   - Representatives of special populations
   - Representatives from agencies serving at-risk, homeless and out-of-school youth

- Representatives from Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations, where applicable

To identify stakeholders, start with individuals and organizations that your programs already work with through industry advisory boards, sector partnerships, community groups, parent-teacher associations and other structures. After identifying those already engaged in your programs, you may need to reach out to new partners to fill gaps in expertise and ensure appropriate breadth and depth of representation among those impacted by CTE. For example, your local Chamber of Commerce, while a great partner, may not include full representation of industry sectors with labor market demand. This is an excellent opportunity to diversify your partnerships and build a stronger career pathways system among education, workforce and community leaders through sustained relationships. Check with your state CTE agency for requirements and guidance on partner recruitment, such as lists of contacts from relevant workforce, economic and community development agencies.

In addition to identifying stakeholders, you will need to select a core leadership team to guide the needs assessment and local application process and facilitate final decision making. This leadership team will likely consist of CTE program administrators and other key local decision-makers. The team will look different ba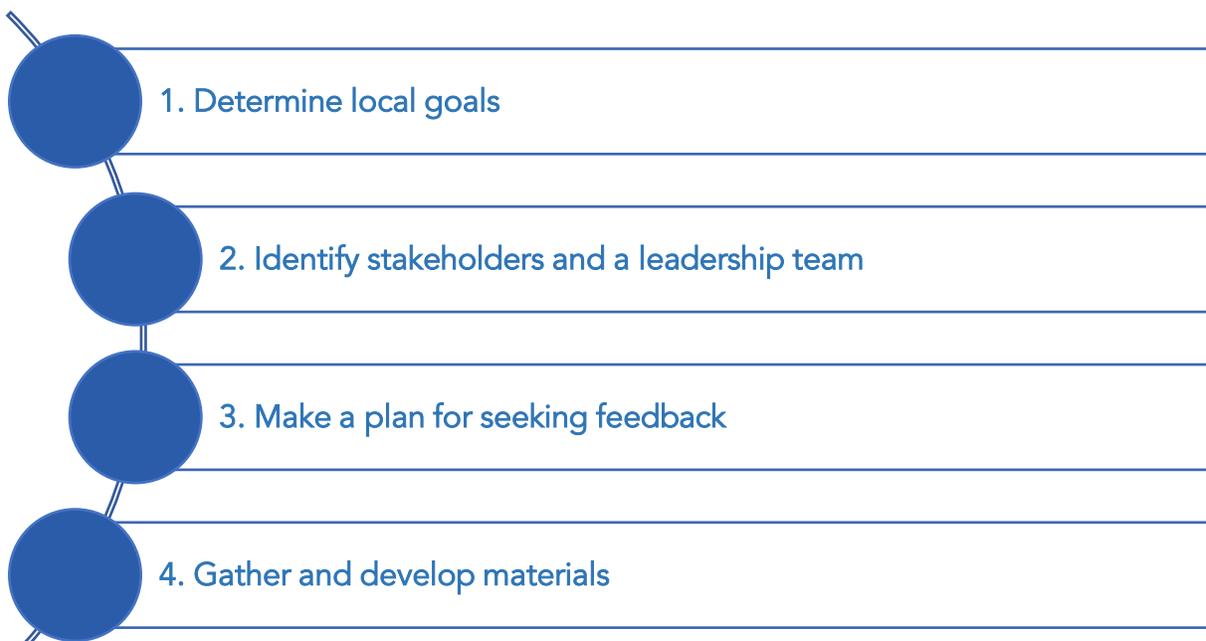sed on the size and characteristics of your institution, service area or district, but whomever you choose should have in-depth knowledge of your CTE programs.

3. Make a Plan for Seeking Feedback

The law makes no requirements about how to organize and work with stakeholders. You can use this flexibility to your advantage, within the requirements set by your state. For instance, you could broaden industry advisory boards to encompass all the above-named stakeholders, or constitute a new group as a separate entity. You could convene all the stakeholders regularly, or meet with subsets of partners who have expertise for particular sections of the needs assessment. In addition to meetings, you can also seek feedback through surveys, interviews, focus groups and listening sessions in person or virtually—consultation does not have to be conducted entirely face-to-face.

As you think about how to gather feedback, inventory existing mechanisms and consider how to build on them. For example, does your school district already survey parents? If so, could you add additional questions relevant to the needs assessment to that survey? Does a representative of your institution already participate in monthly Chamber of Commerce meetings, and could you be added to the agenda one month to dialogue with community leaders on specific needs assessment questions? The sooner you identify possible

---

Foundations of a Rigorous Needs Assessment Process

1. Determine local goals

2. Identify stakeholders and a leadership team

3. Make a plan for seeking feedback

4. Gather and develop materials

information collection opportunities that fit seamlessly with existing work, the easier and more effective the process will be.

After identifying existing mechanisms, look for gaps in that outreach and consider ways to gather input from stakeholders who may not already be part of current activities.

You also need to think about how to ensure a continual feedback loop with key stakeholder groups to meet ongoing consultation requirements. To keep partners motivated, regularly show them the results of their input and publicly recognize their contributions. Links to guides and toolkits with sample documents and best practices for engaging community partners can be found in ACTE's High-quality Tools online library, Business and Community Partnerships section.

4. Gather and Develop Materials

You can begin to build the evidence base for your assessment by compiling already-available sources of regional, state and local information and by developing plans to collect new data. Data of use to the needs assessment process can come from internal sources, such as student performance data, student and parent survey findings and feedback from local industry advisory boards, or from external sources, including state labor market information (LMI) and results of a state or third-party evaluation of your programs. Ensure that you are collecting information from a variety of sources using quantitative and qualitative methods, so that you can cross-validate what you learn from one methodology or information source with what you glean from another source or method of data collection (this is known as "triangulation").

Data collection methods of particular use for needs assessments include surveys, focus groups and listening sessions. Findings from surveys and transcripts from focus groups and listening sessions can be used, in turn, to spark further discussion among stakeholders. Your state may have resources to help you develop questions and deploy surveys.

Your own efforts to engage stakeholders and identify information sources, with support and guidance from your state, will hopefully provide a solid foundation for an internal needs assessment process. However, after considering the time and resources available, you may decide to commission one or more separate evaluations to fulfill parts of the needs assessment. An external evaluator could be a faculty member or graduate student from a local university, a program evaluation expert from a national association, a professional evaluator employed by an evaluation firm or a volunteer from a community or business partner who has evaluation experience and is willing to donate their time. To get started looking for an evaluator, search the American Evaluation Association's directory by location and keyword.

Operationalizing the Process: Translating the Law into Meaningful Assessment

This section of this tool will translate language in sections of Perkins V related to the local needs assessment into meaningful action items, including suggestions on materials to review, stakeholders to consult and questions to ask to further your analysis. The six needs assessment requirements as outlined in the law can be distilled into three main ideas: student performance, labor market alignment and program implementation. Each is addressed below.

Student Performance

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(A)
(A) An evaluation of the performance of the students served by the eligible recipient with respect to State determined and local levels of performance established pursuant to section 113, including an evaluation of performance for special populations and each subgroup described in section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Here the law requires you to consider your students' performance on federal accountability measures in the aggregate and disaggregated for the subpopulations defined in Perkins V. Data must be disaggregated by gender, race and ethnicity, and migrant status (per ESEA) and each of the special populations categories, which include individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults; individuals preparing for nontraditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; out-of-work individuals; English learners; homeless individuals; youth who are in or who have aged out of the foster care system; and youth with a parent who is on active duty in the military.

To make it more rigorous and impactful, review multiple years of Perkins accountability data and any other data that may have relevance. For example, some of the data you report under ESEA or WIOA may be helpful for evaluating student performance, particularly for the new Perkins V secondary indicator pertaining to program quality. Work with those responsible for data collection in your state and at your district, institution or service area to access longitudinal, disaggregated, program-level data that can be filtered and displayed in an easy-to-read manner, so that key trends can be readily identified. At the postsecondary level, your institutional research office might be particularly helpful, and those serving in any similar data and accountability roles at the secondary level, such as in your ESEA Title I office, should also be consulted.

Materials to Review
• Perkins performance data for the past several years, aggregated and disaggregated by CTE program and subpopulation groups
Stakeholders to Consult
• All stakeholders required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty and representatives of special populations • Data staff
Questions to Ask
• How are students in my CTE programs performing on federal accountability indicators in comparison to non-CTE students? • How are students from special populations performing in my CTE programs in comparison to students without identified special needs? • How are students from different genders, races and ethnicities performing in my CTE programs? • Which groups of students are struggling the most in CTE programs? • Where do the biggest gaps in performance exist between subgroups of students? • Which CTE programs overall have the highest outcomes, and which have the lowest? • Are there certain CTE programs where special populations are performing above average? Below average? • What are the potential root causes of inequities in my CTE programs?

Assembling this data is just one step in evaluating performance disparities, as outlined in the National Alliance for Partnership in Equity (NAPE) Program Improvement Process for Equity™. After examining this data to identify significant differences in performance between subpopulations and across programs, the next

step is to consider the root causes of these inequities so that you can later identify corresponding practices that can combat inequity in your CTE programs. One resource that can support this process is the NAPE Nontraditional Career Preparation: Root Causes and Strategies tool, which summarizes the research into root causes of gender inequality and the strategies for addressing these root causes, in relation to nontraditional career pathways. NAPE will release new tools later in 2018 with an intersectional approach, looking at closing equity gaps by gender, race and ethnicity, and disability. To supplement your data and root cause analysis, consider conducting surveys, interviews or focus groups with educators, counselors, students and/or parents to gather feedback on outcomes of your programs related to equity.

Another approach to evaluating student performance is to compare data for CTE concentrators to a similar group of non-CTE students. For secondary students, it would be most salient to look at differences between these groups for graduation rates, academic performance and placement; on the postsecondary level, it would be most relevant to examine credential attainment and placement.

Labor Market Alignment

> **Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(B)(ii)**
> *(ii) (I) aligned to State, regional, Tribal, or local in-demand industry sectors or occupations identified by the State workforce development board described in section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3111) (referred to in this section as the 'State board') or local workforce development board, including career pathways, where appropriate; or*
> *(II) designed to meet local education or economic needs not identified by State boards or local workforce development boards.*

Here the law requires you to consider the alignment between programs offered and the labor market needs of your local area, state and/or region.

Begin by seeking guidance from your state on LMI sources to consider for your needs assessment, and on any state definitions or thresholds for "in-demand industry sectors or occupations" and "high-wage" and "high-skill" occupations. State and local lists of in-demand sectors and jobs should be examined first to ground your analysis. Next, consult your state LMI website for data on current and projected employment, filtered for your local area.

It is important to consider long-term projections in addition to immediate labor market needs, particularly if your programs have a longer time horizon. In addition, local workforce development boards, Chambers of Commerce and local unions or industry associations may have information you can use.

Materials to Review
• Results of any available gap analysis on educational outcomes and employment needs (from the state or separately commissioned)
• State- and local-defined lists of in-demand industry sectors and/or occupations
• State and local LMI
• Real-time job postings data from online search engines, possibly with analytics support from a data firm
• Input from business and industry representatives, with particular reference to opportunities for special populations
• Alumni employment and earnings outcomes from a state workforce agency or state longitudinal data system, or findings from a follow-up survey of alumni

Stakeholders to Consult
• All participants required by law, particularly secondary and postsecondary administrators, career guidance and advisement professionals, business and community partners, local workforce investment/economic development boards, and representatives of special populations
• Data staff

Questions to Ask
• What industries are projected to grow the most in my local area? What occupations?
• Are my CTE program offerings broad enough to expose students to all the in-demand industry sectors or occupations in my region?
• How do my CTE program enrollments match projected job openings? Where are the biggest gaps?
• What are the emerging occupations in my area to which students should be exposed?
• What skill needs have industry partners identified as lacking in my programs?
• Which graduates of my programs are thriving in the labor market, and why?
• What opportunities exist in my local labor market for students with disabilities, English learners or other special populations?

As you analyze this data, focus on comparing the number of students you are graduating in each CTE program area to the number of projected job openings in relevant occupations. Be sure to look into the future, keeping in mind that, in most states, your needs assessment will be the foundation of planning for four years of activities through the local application. Also remember that occupations for which your programs are preparing students may be found across multiple industries.

The state- and local-validated sources of information mentioned above will be fundamental. However, easy-to-use online tools can serve as secondary sources and conversation starters. These include CareerOutlook.US, which displays recent and projected employment and current wages by state and occupation; DataUSA.io, which can be filtered by city or county and includes recent industry, occupation and wage data; and real-time, local job postings from online search engines. Some institutions and state entities have also turned to analytics firms to mine real-time job postings data.

In addition to LMI, feedback from your local industry representatives and, if possible, your alumni, is critical. Local employer input can help to identify trends that may not be evident in reported data, particularly in emerging career areas, and to describe skill needs across industries. You can gather employer input through discussion, surveys and/or focus groups.

To learn whether students who have completed your programs are succeeding in the workforce, consult alumni follow-up survey results. You can also check with your state CTE agency to see if it has access to linked education, employment and earnings data that can be disaggregated for your institution, district or service area.

Program Implementation

While the following four components of the needs assessment are treated separately in the law, they all pertain to the quality and implementation of programs. In contrast to the student performance evaluation, which examines student outcomes, and the labor market alignment analysis, which considers needs that originate from the labor market, these four components address the decisions that you make when delivering CTE programs, including which programs to offer; how you pursue alignment across learner levels and between academic, technical and employability skill standards; your curriculum and instructional strategies; what opportunities for work-based learning, career and technical student organization (CTSO) participation and articulated credit you provide; how you support faculty and staff; and how you ensure access and equity for all CTE students.

Therefore, you may choose to approach the rest of the needs assessment holistically through an evaluation process that encompasses all of these quality program components. The key is to use prior program evaluation findings, or participate in a new program evaluation process, that captures the full breadth of program quality and implementation. Findings from recent (or upcoming) program evaluations conducted by your state as part of a program review process or by a third-party, such as a national accreditor, can form a basis for this comprehensive evaluation of program delivery and implementation. However, additional input from local stakeholders will likely be needed.

If no such evaluations are available, or if the scope of these evaluations fails to meet your needs, you can conduct an evaluation of your programs by demonstrating how they measure against a relevant set of standards. These could be standards already in place in your state, or standards from a legitimate third-party organization, such as ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*. ACTE's evidence-based framework includes nearly 100 indicators across 12 elements to capture the breadth of activities that impact program scope, delivery, implementation and quality, including elements related to the quality of program staff and equity and access.

In addition to ACTE's self-evaluation instrument, the evaluation tools listed below may be relevant to your needs:
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Career Pathway Reviews and Curriculum and Instruction Reviews, which are conducted as part of SREB Needs Assessment Visits
- Rubric for Linked Learning Pathway Quality Review and Continuous Improvement
- National Center for College & Career Transitions' Design Specifications for Implementing the College and Career Pathways System Framework
- Tools from the Council for Occupational Education and from regional accreditors

While the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework* is intended for use by an individual program of study, it can also be used to assess multiple programs of study. To make the evaluation more manageable for larger districts, service areas or institutions, you may consider assessing the overall quality of all of your programs, then selecting either a sample of programs of study to evaluate individually each time the needs assessment is updated or a few priority elements to review, such as work-based learning or student career development.

While this holistic evaluation of program quality and implementation will yield the least duplication, for ease of understanding the requirements as presented in law, we have laid out each of the four needs assessment components related to program implementation separately below, including particular materials to gather and questions to ask yourself about the nature of your programs with respect to these specific topics. There is some duplication among these four components, which is noted below.

Program Size, Scope and Quality

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(B)(i)
(B) A description of how career and technical education programs offered by the eligible recipient are—
(i) sufficient in size, scope and quality to meet the needs of all students served by the eligible recipient; and…

Here the law requires you to assess whether you are offering a sufficient number of courses and programs to meet the needs of your student population; whether those programs are sufficiently broad as well as vertically aligned and linked to the next level of education; and how the quality of program delivery serves to develop student knowledge and skills and prepare them for success.

In their new Perkins V state plan, your state is required to include specific definitions for "size," "scope" and "quality." States may choose to use existing definitions or update them to reflect new priorities. In the past, states have defined these terms in several ways:
- **Size**: Definitions of size typically address such factors as the minimum number of programs offered by each eligible recipient, or available to each student; the minimum number of courses offered within each program or pathway; or minimum class size. Some states have defined size through a calculation that compares CTE programs offered to total student population, and/or to overall CTE participation. Definitions may differ on the secondary and postsecondary levels.
- **Scope**: Definitions of scope typically refer to program sequencing, from introductory to more advanced curriculum; linkages between secondary and postsecondary education; and the program's ability to address the full breadth of the subject matter.
- **Quality**: These definitions may address generally whether programs have the ability to impart to

students the skills and knowledge necessary for success; or may include specific criteria such as implementation of a continuous improvement plan, presence of an advisory committee or evidence of teacher/faculty qualifications.

Focus your efforts for this part of the needs assessment on how well your programs meet these state-defined terms. For instance, when evaluating size, consider the number of programs and courses offered, as well as the number of students served by CTE programs in relation to the total student population that could be served. Examine longitudinal data, both in the aggregate and disaggregated by Perkins-defined special populations and subgroups, and look forward to examine student enrollment projections over the next few years.

For a more in-depth assessment of how well your program offerings meet student demand, look at the number of students applying to your programs or on waiting lists, if applicable, and survey current and potential students to gauge their interest in particular CTE programs, in order to plan for the future.

To evaluate scope, consider how your programs align and articulate offerings across learner levels, including curriculum, instruction, faculty and staff, facilities and equipment, and career development activities. Examine policies for, participation in and outcomes of credit transfer agreements and dual/concurrent enrollment programs.

Depending on your state's definition of scope, you may also want to explore whether your program is delivering the full breadth of knowledge and skills within each subject area, or if there are gaps in the curriculum and opportunities you are providing. To assess this breadth, compare your curricular offerings to state standards and state-developed programs of study, if applicable, within each CTE subject area. Also consider if extended learning experiences, such as work-based learning, CTSOs and articulated credit, are available across all programs of study, or only in some.

To evaluate quality, consider whether the various aspects of your program—curriculum, instruction, career development, work-based learning and more—are designed and delivered in a way that imparts to students the skills and knowledge necessary for success. One way to accomplish this is to compare your program delivery and implementation to a relevant set of quality standards from the state or from a third-party, such as a national organization or accreditor. This process is described more fully in the Program Implementation section above.

Materials to Review

Size:
- Total number of program areas, and number of courses within each program area
- Total number of students who could be served by the eligible recipient, aggregate and disaggregated
- CTE participant and concentrator enrollments for the past several years, aggregate and disaggregated
- CTE course enrollments for the past several years
- Number of students applying to your programs, if applicable
- Number of students on waiting lists, if applicable
- Survey results assessing student interest in particular CTE programs

Scope:
- Documentation of course sequences and aligned curriculum
- Credit transfer agreements
- Data on student retention and transition to postsecondary education within the program of study
- Descriptions of dual/concurrent enrollment programs, and data on student participation
- Data on student credential attainment
- Curriculum standards that show depth and breadth of programs
- Opportunities for extended learning within and across programs of study

Quality:
- A wide variety of materials can inform this evaluation. In addition to the materials listed throughout this document, it would be appropriate to consult curriculum standards and frameworks, lesson plans, assessments, partnership communications and engagement activities, safety requirements, work-based learning procedures, CTSO activities and alignment, data collection mechanisms and program improvement processes.

Stakeholders to Consult

- All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, representatives of special populations, and parents and students
- Data staff

In addition, state definitions of quality sometimes refer to alignment with in-demand sectors and occupations, or to student performance outcomes. If this is the case in your state, you should pull in the results of your labor market alignment analysis and your review of performance data when assessing quality.

Progress Toward Implementing Programs of Study

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(C)

(C) An evaluation of progress toward the implementation of career and technical education programs and programs of study.

Here the law requires you to consider how well you are implementing the full scope of programs of study, defined in Perkins V as "a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level that--

(a) incorporates challenging State academic standards, including those adopted by a State under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965;

(b) addresses both academic and technical knowledge and skills, including employability skills;

(c) is aligned with the needs of industries in the economy of the State, region, Tribal community, or local area;

(d) progresses in specificity (beginning with all aspects of an industry or career cluster and leading to more occupation-specific instruction);

(e) has multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing; and

(f) culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential."

This section overlaps with the scope and quality components of the needs assessment, outlined above, as well as with the labor market alignment analysis. If your state definition of "quality" does not already include specific requirements for key program components, this is your opportunity to do a close review of the structure of your programs as well as the extended opportunities they provide to students, such as opportunities for dual enrollment or work-based learning.

Recruitment, Retention and Training of CTE Educators

> **Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(D)**
> *(D) A description of how the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of career and technical education teachers, faculty, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups underrepresented in such professions.*

Here the law requires you to assess and develop plans to improve the quality of your faculty and staff through recruitment, retention and professional development, with particular attention paid to diversity in the profession.

When assessing the state of your staff, take a comprehensive view of what you know about educators, administrators, staff and guidance and career advisement professionals across your programs. Evaluate what these educators bring to the table: their preparation and credentialing, in comparison to state, district or institution requirements, and the ways they demonstrate their commitment to the profession through pursuit of advanced certification or extensive professional development. Look for gaps in expertise within and across programs. In addition, consider how you recruit educators and staff and prepare them for their responsibilities, particularly new educators coming from an industry background.

To take this analysis further, compare your current staff capacity to your future plans. For instance, if you intend to develop new programs of study or expand your career development services in the next four years, look at your current staff and make projections about where you need to increase skills or hire new people.

It is also vital that you evaluate the ways in which you are supporting faculty and staff through wages, benefits, professional development, and recruitment and retention activities. Develop surveys or conduct focus groups to seek feedback on faculty and staff needs and preferences.

Materials to Review
• Data on faculty, staff, administrator and counselor preparation; credentials; salaries and benefits; and demographics
• Description of recruitment and retention processes
• Descriptions of professional development, mentoring and externship opportunities
• Data on educator participation in professional development, mentoring and externship
• Findings from teacher evaluations
• Findings from surveys/focus groups of educators' needs and preferences
• Data on educator and staff retention
• Information about teacher shortage areas and projections of future staffing needs

Stakeholders to Consult
• All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, and representatives of special populations

Questions to Ask
• How diverse is my staff? Does it reflect the demographic makeup of the student body?
• What processes are in place to recruit and induct new teachers and staff? Are these processes efficient and effective, especially for teachers coming from industry?
• Are all the educators teaching my programs adequately credentialed?
• Do I offer regular, substantive professional development opportunities?
• What professional development offerings are most highly rated by participating staff?
• What do educators report as needs and preferences for professional development, benefits, retention and more?
• In what subject areas do I need to develop or recruit more educators?

In addition, consider your methods for recruiting and retaining educators and staff from populations traditionally unrepresented in the profession. Analyze the demographics of your teachers and staff in comparison to the makeup of your student body, and consider to what extent students are learning from educators who reflect themselves and their communities. To make this more robust, conduct a root causes and strategies analysis similar to that outlined in the Student Performance and

Progress Toward Improving Access and Equity sections of this publication, and consult colleagues who worked on teacher shortage and diversity issues for ESEA Title I.

Progress Toward Improving Equity and Access

> **Perkins Section 134(c)(2)(E)**
>
> *(E) A description of progress toward implementation of equal access to high-quality career and technical education courses and programs of study for all students, including—*
> *(i) strategies to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, the courses and programs for special populations;*
> *(ii) providing programs that are designed to enable special populations to meet the local levels of performance; and*
> *(iii) providing activities to prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings that will lead to self-sufficiency.*

Here the law requires you to evaluate your progress in providing equal access to CTE programs, particularly CTE programs that lead to strong positive outcomes for students, and in providing CTE in a way that maximizes success for special populations.

This component can be broken down into three subsections: access, performance and program delivery. First, look at participation data for students from special populations, and consider how you promote programs, recruit students and provide career guidance in a way that is accessible for special populations. Strategies for inclusion include promotional materials that depict students from special populations; active recruitment of students from special populations; and career guidance that helps students from special populations choose a pathway that fits their goals and strengths.

Next, consider student performance data for special populations by bringing in the data disaggregation and root causes and strategies analysis you performed for the Student Performance section of the needs assessment. In consultation with stakeholders, develop plans to implement the strategies identified through the root causes and strategies analysis and measures to evaluate your progress on those strategies.

Finally, consider your program delivery through an equity lens. Look at the accommodations, modifications and

Materials to Review
• Promotional materials
• Recruitment activities for special populations
• Career guidance activities for special populations
• Processes for providing accommodations, modifications and supportive services for special populations
• Information on accelerated credit and credentials available for special populations
• Procedures for work-based learning for special populations
• Data on participation and performance for students from special populations
• Findings from the root causes and strategies analysis from the Student Performance component
• Findings from surveys/focus groups with students, parents (if applicable) and community representatives from special populations

Stakeholders to Consult
• All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, representatives of special populations, and parents and students

Questions to Ask
• Which population groups are underrepresented in your CTE programs overall, and in particular program areas? Overrepresented?
• Are there additional enrollment discrepancies related to high-wage, high-skill occupations?
• What barriers currently exist that prevent special population groups from accessing your programs?
• How are special population groups performing in your programs?
• What accommodations, modifications and supportive services do you currently provide to ensure the success of special population groups? Which ones are most effective? Which ones are underutilized?
• What additional accommodations, modifications and supportive services would help ensure access and equity for all students within your programs?
For additional questions to ask, consult other sections of this publication.

supportive services you offer, and examine your curriculum, instruction, materials and assessments for biased and discriminatory content. In addition, identify barriers to participation in work-based learning, CTSOs and articulated credit opportunities and your strategies for addressing those barriers. Deepen this analysis by

conducting focus groups, surveys or interviews with students from special populations, their parents (if appropriate) and community-based organizations that work with special population groups to learn more about their needs and preferences and their perceptions of how well your programs are helping them reach their goals.

Using Findings to Drive Local Applications

Perkins V Section 134(b)(1) and (2)

(b) Contents.—The eligible agency shall determine the requirements for local applications, except that each local application shall contain—

(1) a description of the results of the comprehensive needs assessment conducted under subsection (c);

(2) information on the career and technical education course offerings and activities that the eligible recipient will provide with funds under this part, which shall include not less than 1 program of study approved by a State under section 124(b)(2), including—

(A) how the results of the comprehensive needs assessment described in subsection (c) informed the selection of the specific career and technical education programs and activities selected to be funded;

To conclude your needs assessment process, you will have to merge these separate analyses into one set of findings, and engage stakeholders in setting a future vision for addressing these needs, including deciding which programs and activities to prioritize for funding in your four-year Perkins V local application. This prioritization should take into account the six required uses of funds for local recipients in Perkins V, and the nine elements of the local application also required in law. In addition, the state agency has the latitude to determine other requirements for local applications, and your state may have additional directions or templates for presenting needs assessment findings as part of the local application process.

The answers to the questions you asked yourself during each piece of the needs assessment process should help you identify the most pressing needs of your local CTE system, including the needs of both students and local employers. The local application offers an opportunity for you to determine how best to address those needs through Perkins, and more broadly, how to shape your CTE program offerings and supports over the next four years.

Perkins funding must be spent on activities that meet needs identified in the needs assessment, but there is no expectation that you will be able to meet all the identified needs within your four-year local application, and certainly not within your initial budget year. In prioritizing areas of focus, think about the program areas needing the greatest attention, areas where alternative funding sources are not available, or areas that will have the greatest impact on student achievement. Here are a few more overarching questions you may want to consider:

- Which performance indicators are you struggling with the most? What strategies can help you address those needs?
- Are there immediate employer needs in your community that you can help meet? What about longer term needs toward which you can start building a pipeline?
- Which elements of your programs are the strongest? The weakest? Which of the weaker elements could you address to have the largest impact on student performance?
- How can you offer more students the opportunity to reap the full benefits of programs of study, including aligned pathways and recognized postsecondary credentials?
- Which professional development needs are most pressing? What strategies will you use to support educators over the next four years to ensure your programmatic and performance goals can be met?
- Which specific subpopulations are struggling the most in your programs? Are there root causes of these challenges that can be addressed immediately? Which ones need a more comprehensive long-term plan?

The leadership team you identified earlier will be particularly helpful in this phrase of the process, as you will likely have to make tough decisions about which needs to prioritize and which solutions will best meet identified needs, given the full spectrum of information you uncovered, as well as current research on evidence-based practices and the context of your local community.

Translating your comprehensive local needs assessment into action, in the form of the local application, is an invaluable opportunity to focus on program improvement, and to implement plans that will have a long-term impact on access to high-quality CTE for all students. This is your chance to help strengthen and improve the entire education system through the benefits of CTE!