



Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) supports Career Technical Education (CTE) programs by strengthening connections between secondary and postsecondary education, aligning to the needs of the economy, and improving the academic and technical achievement of students who choose to enroll in these programs.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) believes that the federal investment in CTE legislation, Perkins, should be strengthened by re-examining and re-framing the law to ensure equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study and to better position CTE to help build the solutions needed to close the skills gap and improve student achievement. Therefore, NASDCTEc believes that federal CTE legislation needs a clearer focus and that its purpose should be ***“to develop the academic and CTE skills of students to ensure America's global competitiveness through programs of study, partnerships with employers, and further education and careers.”*** These recommendations seek to accomplish this purpose and promote innovation, accountability, and equitable access to high-quality CTE that meet the needs of our nation's students and employers.

Global Competitiveness

- ***Link CTE to labor market*** – States are in the best position to determine how CTE can meet the demands of their state and regional economies. Federal CTE funds should only support high-quality CTE programs of study that meet two or more of the following criteria: high wage, high skill, high demand, or high growth. Definitions of these terms should account for varying state and regional economic conditions and labor market needs.
- ***Rigorous standards*** – Consistent, quality benchmarks for students in CTE programs of study, regardless of where students live or which delivery system they use, are essential. Federal CTE legislation should require all CTE programs of study to align to rigorous content standards that are national in scope, are informed by the needs of the workplace, and ensure excellence. NASDCTEc believes that federal CTE legislation should encourage state adoption of rigorous college- and career-ready standards, such as those found in the Common Core State Standards and the [Common Career Technical Core](#).¹ Increased consistency and rigor in CTE programs of study will better equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a global economy.
- ***Innovation funding*** – The next federal CTE legislation should focus on improving student outcomes through innovative approaches and programmatic improvement. The next federal CTE legislation should allocate new formula funding, above and beyond the basic state grant, to states to incentivize innovative practices and solutions at the state and local levels. Successful innovations should be scaled up using the basic state grant funds.

Partnerships

- ***Partnerships with business and industry*** – Strong partnerships between the CTE community and business and industry are essential to high-quality CTE programs of study. Federal CTE legislation should require local advisory committees comprised of employers and education stakeholders who will actively partner to design and deliver CTE programs of study and provide assistance in the form of curricula, standards, certifications, work-based learning opportunities, teacher/faculty externships, equipment, etc. States should have the flexibility to structure local advisory committees in a way that best meets the needs of their state (in terms of governance, funding, geographic and other influencing factors).
- ***Consortia*** – Coordination and collaboration between secondary and postsecondary partners is essential and must be improved. The federal CTE legislation should incentivize consortia of secondary and postsecondary eligible entities to better facilitate coordination and transitions between learner levels. States should have the flexibility to structure consortia in a way that best meets the needs of their state in terms of governance, funding, and geographic factors.

Preparation for Education and Careers

- ***School counseling and career planning*** - Comprehensive counseling, including career and academic counseling, should be expanded and offered no later than middle school. Federal CTE legislation should provide greater support for career counseling, including all students having an individual learning plan that includes the student's academic and careers goals, documents progress towards completion of the credits required to graduate from their secondary program, and indicates the requisite knowledge, skills and work-based learning experiences necessary for career success. These plans should be actively managed by students, parents, and school-level personnel and should extend into postsecondary education to ensure successful transitions to the workplace.

Programs of Study

- ***High-quality CTE programs*** – Federal CTE legislation should focus on promoting excellence in CTE. To that end, NASDCTEc believes that more specificity is needed to define elements that are necessary to ensuring high-quality programs. Research by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Educationⁱⁱ underscores our recommendation that federal funding should be delivered through rigorous programs of study, as defined by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education's 10 component framework.ⁱⁱⁱ The law should emphasize strategies that improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary systems, such as statewide articulation agreements, transcribed postsecondary credits, and stackable credentials. High-quality CTE programs should also expose students to employment and leadership opportunities, for instance, through work-based learning and participation in Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). Federal funds should be distributed only to state-approved, rigorous CTE programs of study.

Research and Accountability

- **Accountability measures** – Strong accountability measures are critical to demonstrating CTE’s positive return on investment. The current CTE performance indicators should be re-evaluated to ensure that they provide the feedback necessary for program evaluation and improvement, as well as document CTE’s impact on students’ academic and technical achievement. Federal CTE legislation should require common definitions and measures across the states, as well as allow for alignment of performance measures across related education and workforce programs.
- **Research and professional development** – Research and evaluation are important guideposts for directing practitioners toward effective practices and guiding state decisions on CTE. Federal CTE legislation should support the continuation of a National Research Center for Career and Technical Education to support CTE educators and leaders through leadership development, quality research, professional development, dissemination, and technical assistance.

State Leadership and Governance

- **State flexibility** – States should have the flexibility to determine the allocation of funds between secondary and postsecondary education. Funding should be awarded to a single eligible agency as defined in current law. Additionally, states should be given the flexibility to use the reserve fund to implement a performance-based funding system.
- **State administration and leadership** – Strong state leadership is critical to ensuring that states have the data systems, standards, and partnerships to oversee the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs of study. Adequate resources for state leadership and state administration, including maintaining the state administrative match, are necessary to ensure effective program administration and equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) represents state and territory leaders of CTE through leadership and advocacy that supports an innovative and rigorous CTE system that prepares students for both college and careers. CTE State Directors lead the planning and implementation of CTE in their respective states and these recommendations reflect their priorities.

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ⁱ National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, Common Career Technical Core, <http://www.careertech.org/career-technical-education/cctc/>

ⁱⁱ Shumer, R., Stringfield, S., Stipanovic, N., & Murphy, N. (2011, November). *Programs of study: A cross-study examination of programs in three states*. Louisville, KY: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Louisville. http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_pos_crossstudy.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, “Career and Technical Programs of Study: A Design Framework.” The 10 components are: (1) legislation and policies, (2) partnerships, (3) professional development, (4) accountability and evaluation systems, (5) college and career readiness standards, (6) course sequences, (7) credit transfer agreements, (8) guidance counseling and academic advisement, (9) teaching and learning strategies, and (10) technical skills assessments.