

Decisions, Decisions!

A Synthesis of Tech Prep as Implemented Under Perkins IV Transition Plans

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Perkins IV includes several significant changes, with one of the most notable relating to Tech Prep. Where states were once required to keep all Tech Prep activities separate from the basic state grant, including funding and reporting requirements, they now have significant flexibility in how to address this program and its funding.

With the passage of Perkins IV, each state had several decisions to make. Should they merge Tech Prep with the basic state grant or keep the status quo? Should the merge be permanent or temporary? Should only part of the funds be consolidated? And if the two funding streams were merged, how should the reserve fund be used? Finally, how can states improve the quality and quantity of articulation agreements, including progress toward statewide articulation agreements?

Making these decisions and fulfilling these requirements is complicated and has many considerations and implications. Below, you will find a snapshot of where states stand on three issues: merging of Tech Prep, use of their reserve fund as it relates to Tech Prep-like activities and progress toward higher quality, and hopefully statewide, articulation agreements. The information in this brief is the result of an analysis of the states' Perkins IV transition plans.

To merge or not to merge? When given the choice to merge Tech Prep funds with the basic state grant (BSG), each state took the opportunity to carefully weigh its options. While the criteria for making this decision differed greatly, there were three questions that nearly every state answered to guide its decision – what is the future of Tech Prep in the state, can the state maintain Tech Prep under the new accountability requirements, and would merging the funds allow more flexibility to advance Tech Prep-like activities or programs of study?

21 states are merging title I and title II during the transition year.

Yes, we will merge! For those 21 states that made the decision to combine the separate funding streams, 90% have already decided to make this transition permanent and have or will reflect this change in their five-year plan. This process differs greatly from those states choosing not to merge during the transition year. Of the thirty states not merging, 46% are reserving the right to revisit the issue after the transition year and before the submission of the five-year plan. This decision is due in part to waiting until stakeholder meetings have been convened, but also because the states are determining whether they prefer Tech Prep funds to be subject to Title I rules (if combined) or to retain the flexibility of competitive grants.

How will states use these newly consolidated funds? Over 60% of consolidating states will be using the funds to support their iteration of programs of study. Additionally, many states are hoping to fully integrate Tech Prep into the general CTE curriculum while focusing on aligning programs.

An example of this can be found in **Kansas**, which is merging funds in order to expand successful Tech Prep efforts and best practices to all CTE students. Kansas hopes that the consolidation will provide additional funds at the institutional level to assist all eligible recipients in the development and

implementation of programs of study and increased opportunities to link secondary and postsecondary education programs.

Similarly, **Vermont** noted that it plans on holding all CTE programs up to a Tech Prep standard and that this was the basis of the decision to merge Title II funding into the basic Title I grants.

There is one anomaly among the states when it comes to merging funds. **Alabama** is the only state that decided to merge 75% of its funds while keeping the remainder available on a competitive basis. As for the future of Alabama's funds, the decision to keep Tech Prep separate or to consolidate all funds in the five-year plan will be based on the ability of the Tech Prep recipients to provide the required documentation for the additional indicators.

Merging? No, thank you. As noted above, the thirty states that have chosen not to consolidate their funding in the immediate future are a little more flexible as to whether merging might happen down the road. This being said, these states do have a very clear vision as to how they plan to use their Title II funds for the transition year and possibly beyond.

Of the non-merging states, most are redirecting title II funds to new activities.

The focus of the Tech Prep funds among the states differs greatly. While a significant portion of the funds are still being sent out to local consortia and supporting traditional Tech Prep activities, more than half of the non-merging states stated they will use their funds on new activities. Several states are taking advantage of this time of change to reevaluate current practices and develop new Tech Prep and CTE models to implement.

Specifically, eight states will be using the funds to develop and/or expand articulation agreements, while five states plan to focus more funding on professional development. Over one-third of the states will be using a portion of their funds to support the development and/or implementation of programs of study or career pathways. Other unique uses of these funds include special populations (AZ), aligning academic and technical curriculum (PA), and dual enrollment (SD).

A few states are choosing to dedicate a portion of the funding to one specific project. The **District of Columbia** will be using some of its funding to support a feasibility study about the use of Tech Prep as a vehicle for the establishment of a unique, secondary/postsecondary, accelerated workforce education system. **Montana** will be shifting Title II funds from a regional service area approach to statewide activities centered on six broad career fields called the *Consortium for Educational Advancement*.

While using the funds to implement and grow Project Lead The Way and implement Career Majors (a continuation of a program in existence under Tech Prep), **Indiana** is also using the transition year to analyze and develop the best mechanisms by which to better establish this connection and to more thoroughly communicate best practices amongst the two groups.

A significant change for those states choosing not to consolidate funds is new Title II accountability requirements. Notably, six of the twenty-one states with merged funding streams said that perhaps they would have kept Tech Prep as a separate line item if the new accountability requirements were not so stringent. Several of these states were concerned about the cost and manpower necessary to keep up with the tasks. This does not seem to be the case for many of the bigger states (e.g., California, Texas, Florida, New York) that receive the largest title II grants.

Reserve Fund Innovations: Another significant change that has occurred under Perkins IV is that the reserve fund is more flexible. Under the new law, states have a broad range of options as to how they may distribute these funds. The resources may be distributed by formula or competitively, and may be used in a variety of ways, including a focus on a high need or innovation. For the purposes of this paper, we looked at how the reserve fund might be used to offset the decision to merge or not merge Tech Prep. For the twenty-one merging states, at least 65% have decided not to direct reserve funds to former Title II activities.

What is a clear trend is that nearly every state is taking advantage of the reserve fund and states are using the reserve fund for unique and different purposes than in the past.

- **Alabama** is merging the majority of the reserve fund, but retaining approximately \$500,000 to be used for direct consortia support.
- **Connecticut** and **Kansas** are using their funds to issue competitive grants to both secondary and postsecondary institutions, while **Georgia** is distributing its funds by formula with 70% issued to rural areas and 30% issued based on the percentages of CTE students. Kansas is similar to **Georgia** in that it is distributing funds competitively to areas that are rural or have high percentages of CTE students. **North Dakota** and **Maryland** are also targeting rural areas, with Maryland administering its funds through a competitive process.
- **Idaho** is allowing funds to be used as a source for supporting innovative programs and the necessary accompanying technology. **Nebraska** is also focusing on innovation through both competitive grants and formula-based programs. Additionally, the state is concentrating on eliminating duplicate resources within the state and furthering Advanced Learning Partnerships.
- **Louisiana** is specifically looking to fund activities that link and transition academic and CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary level. Similarly, **Tennessee** is focused on funding transition activities and models of academic integration as well as developing new secondary CTE programs.
- Five states are choosing to allocate their resources to expanding specific projects.
 - **Oklahoma** is competitively distributing funds for projects such as High Schools That Work, Tech Now, and career academies.
 - Through a formula, **Maine** is funding a NOCTI pilot, CTE strategic plan implementation, a curriculum resource center, and a few other projects.
 - **Rhode Island** is funding further development and implementation of Career Clusters, and **South Carolina** is supporting the implementation of new high school technology CTE courses.
 - Lastly, **Utah** is focusing on a Regional Pathway Coordination Initiative to assist in the implementation of programs of study.
- Guaranteed funds for the TP consortia in **Nevada** are being distributed with the rest of the reserve fund being sent out through competitive grants.

Perkins IV significantly strengthens the definition of what qualifies for an articulation agreement.

Articulation Agreements: While linking secondary and postsecondary programs was a goal under Perkins II and III, the new law drills down the formerly broad definition. The law now requires a “*program of study*” to link secondary and postsecondary programs, and encourages progress

towards statewide articulation agreements. Further, the definition of what qualifies as an articulation agreement was strengthened to require a written agreement, signed off annually by the heads of the collaborating institutions. This was done to try to remove policy barriers to credit sharing relationships and to begin to build an infrastructure so that articulation agreements can become more systemic and not exist between just two instructors.

States vary greatly in their progress on articulation agreements. Some states are just beginning the discussion while others have had high quality agreements in place for some time. And thirteen states have at least one statewide articulation agreement completed. Additionally, it should be noted that many other states have regional and local articulation agreements in place and plan on building on and expanding these agreements across the state.

There is great variation in how states approach articulation agreements. Below are a few examples:

One of the more advanced states in achieving statewide articulation is **Alabama**, which currently has eighty-nine courses that have been cross-walked to postsecondary coursework and are approved for statewide articulation. Additionally, the state has a program called Plans of Instruction (POI) which originated in the postsecondary community and is being used to ensure that the articulation effort remains intact. In order to achieve this goal, a team of secondary and postsecondary CTE personnel review the content of POIs and secondary education courses. Following this step, statewide articulation agreements are established based on the content review and identification of corresponding secondary and postsecondary competencies.

Florida is unique in that the state legislature has passed bills requiring articulation agreements be designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue an education that leads directly to work or that may be transferred to a community college. Additionally, an articulation project has been implemented to develop statewide articulation agreements for postsecondary adult vocational education. Currently, there are fourteen programs that articulate.

While progress is being made among several states, some problem areas have presented themselves. The most common and perhaps most difficult problem to overcome is getting widespread postsecondary acceptance of articulated credits. At this time, there does not seem to be a magic panacea to address this issue, but it is the hope of the states that as this issue progresses, statewide articulation agreements will move forward.

Final thoughts: What does all of this information mean? While all states are invested in advancing CTE and keeping it current with today's market and educational environment, there is no cookie-cutter approach for how best to govern CTE or direct Perkins funding. Rather, it is important that states have the flexibility to craft their state plans to address specific CTE needs presented in *their* state. This is possible now more than ever under Perkins IV, and as all fifty-one state plans develop and progress, this trend will only further grow.

Visit http://careertech.org/state_plan where all 51 state transition plans can be viewed by NASDCTEc members.