

Section 1: Introduction

A. INTRODUCTION

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) provides secondary, postsecondary, and adult technical education programs with federal assistance.

This federal legislation seeks to ensure that states are economically competitive by helping learners develop the academic and occupational skills which are necessary to work in a technically advanced society, while doing so in congruence with the workplace needs, as well as encouraging equitable participation in career and technical education (CTE) by all segments of the population.

This handbook addresses the postsecondary application of the Carl D. Perkins program in Arkansas and is intended for the training, use and reference of state and institutional level Perkins grant administrators.

B. ARKANSAS PRIORITIES FOR PERKINS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The work of career and technical education in Arkansas is diverse and delivered by numerous state agencies and community organizations. The goals of CTE vary by provider but in the context of Perkins, priorities include increased rates of enrollment, retention and completion, and placement in employment.

Beyond these broad priorities is an underlying desire to make CTE a more relevant option for people readying themselves for the education and workforce needs of the 21st century. To move CTE to the next level will require a systematic rethinking of how CTE is provided and how resources are allocated. Higher academic standards must be required for all CTE programs and obsolete or declining programs must be eliminated in favor of courses tied to emerging needs of high wage, high skill business and industry. The pathway from education to earnings must appear seamless to the student and made easier through improved linkages between high schools, colleges and universities, and employers. To achieve this, faculty, administrators and support staff must serve the whole student and provide support beyond mere instruction that reduces barriers to enrollment and completion.

Decisions regarding Perkins allocations at the local and state levels should support these overall goals and should strive to have the greatest possible impact on student achievement for the greatest number of vocational concentrators. Examples of activities that support these priorities include:

Increase Student Achievement

- Instruction that provides students with a solid foundation of academic skills and the knowledge to apply those skills in advanced education and/or training and employment.
- Challenging programs that integrate academic and technical skill development through contextual class and work-based learning experiences.

- Professional development that focuses on improving academic and technical skills and assuring that CTE students are taught to the same challenging academic proficiencies as other students. Preferred professional development is targeted, not random, meaningful, relevant, and related to needs of the workplace and workforce.
- Create increased linkages between secondary and postsecondary through formal programs of study and other activities so that students are prepared to succeed at the postsecondary level.

Expand Student Support Services

- Expanded support for student services to address assessment of aptitude and academic skills, placement, career exploration and academic support.

Support Economic and Workforce Development Initiatives

- Support economic development efforts that improve the economic vitality of Arkansas.
- Identify workplace needs, current status of economic sectors, emerging technologies and related career areas through improved workforce skills.
- Support development of regional targeted sectors identified by ADED.
- Increased involvement of business and industry to review curricula and assure that programs reflect standards of business and industry.
- Specialized accreditation for specific programs with a quality curriculum which meets the guidelines and standards set by the accrediting body.

Perkins as Change Agent for CTE Reform

- Support changes in institutional processes that result in improved instruction and learning.
- Collect data that is complete, accurate, valid and reliable that can be used as basis for improved program development and informed decision making.
- Contribute to activities that allow institutions to respond to workforce development changing economic needs of the state and the new economy.

C. GENERAL PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE CARL D. PERKINS ACT

The general intent of Congress in authorizing Perkins IV is to make the United States more competitive in the current world economy and to prepare workers to take advantage of emerging opportunities. To that end there are four overarching goals: 1) challenging academic standards; 2) broadening services that integrate academic and technical instruction; 3) increasing linkages between secondary and postsecondary institutions; 4) providing additional resources in the classroom.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) administers Perkins funding. A multi-step process determines the amount of funding each state will receive. The calculations are made using a formula based upon a) size of state population in particular age groups, b) state's per capita income, c) U.S. per capita income, and d) total federal appropriation for basic grants.

Basic grants are awarded to a state “eligible agency” which has been designated as the sole state agency responsible for the administration or supervision of vocational and technical education in the State. In Arkansas, that is the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE).

D. Federal Overview and History of CTE¹

In the early 20th century, battles raged over the role of classical education that prepared students to enter college and practical education that prepared students to enter a trade. More Americans were beginning to access public education and expressed increased needs for skills training in addition to or in place of pure academics. Proponents of practical education were firm in their desire for a curriculum that prepared students to compete in the new Industrial Age.

Federal funding for vocational education began in 1917 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act, legislation based upon the need to prepare people to earn a living in a growing industrial economy. Support for vocational training has been rollercoaster-like over the years—considered critical during times of war but having to withstand threats of discontinuance at other times. The role and scope of vocational education greatly expanded in the Sixties with the advent of area vocational schools and specialized training programs. Representative Carl D. Perkins of Kentucky was one of the most influential advocates for vocational education in Congress and was instrumental in passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 that replaced the Smith-Hughes legislation. During the Seventies, federal legislation began a push for vocational education to address the special needs of disabled and disadvantaged students. The trend continued into the Eighties with the passage of the first Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1984 (Perkins I). The Perkins Act was reauthorized in 1990 (Perkins II), extended in 1995 amid political wrangling, and reauthorized in 1998 (Perkins III), and will continue in its present form until reauthorized, replaced, or eliminated.

The purpose of the Perkins Act of 2006 is to more fully develop the academic and technical skills of secondary students and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in occupational programs. This is accomplished by a) building upon existing State efforts to develop challenging academic standards; b) by promoting integration of academic and technical instruction; c) link secondary and postsecondary instruction; d) increasing State flexibility in providing services and activities that improve technical education; e) and disseminating national research and providing developmental and technical assistance that improves technical education programs, services, and activities.

In his message to Congress in 1916, President Wilson noted that vocational and industrial education was vitally important to the whole country “for the critical years of economic development immediately ahead of us.” While the particulars may have

¹ *The Official Guide to the Perkins Act of 1998*. Association for Career and Technical Education. 1998. Pg 5-11.

changed, the primary challenge remains familiar—equipping Americans with the education and skills required to compete in a changing, global economy, and to provide increased options for career choices. With the demands of a new and challenging 21st century, vocational education is evolving from its original focus on preparing students for work immediately following high school. With national and state school reform efforts focused on academic achievement, and with the fastest-growing occupations now requiring some postsecondary education, “vocational” education is giving way to “career and technical” education which integrates academic and skills training that is more relevant to the complexity of jobs in the 21st century marketplace.²

It is important to note that Perkins IV contains increased references to technology—use of it in the classroom, training teachers to use it, and distance learning. These are indications of Congressional intent that Perkins funding be used to respond to the technological realities of today’s economy.

It is also important to note that in Perkins IV a much greater emphasis is placed upon program accountability. Continual improvement is now measured by positive movement in areas related to a list of core performance indicators described in the Act and funds are to be directed toward program areas or populations that program outcomes data indicate are in greatest need.

Recipients of Perkins funds should ensure that Perkins funded programs and activities are responsive to current industry needs and fulfill the purposes of the Perkins Act.

E. Arkansas Overview and History of CTE³

The passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 is generally accepted as the beginning of vocational education in Arkansas, even though there are references in State Board of Education meeting minutes in 1913 to requirements for training schools for nurses. The Arkansas legislature happened to be in session at the time the Smith-Hughes Act passed and accepted the provisions of the Act. The State Board approved a plan to be submitted to the federal government in March of that year. Vocational education during school year 1917-1918 consisted of 497 secondary and adult students enrolled in trades and industrial, agriculture, and home economics. By academic year 2004-05, there were 187,877 secondary and postsecondary CTE students as reported on the Perkins Comprehensive Annual Report.

Vocational education in Arkansas was administered by the Department of Education and E. B. Matthew was selected as the first full-time State Director of Vocational Education in 1928.

Perkins I funds were distributed using a request for proposals process for postsecondary institutions and was primarily directed at special populations and at

² Office of Vocational and Adult Education. www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/index.html

³ *A Brief History of Vocational Education in Arkansas 1917-1985*. Geneva Guthrie. Notes for presentation delivered at workshop of vocational educators on May 28, 1985.

specific projects. Funds were administered by the Division of Vocational and Technical Education. Effective in 1991 with Perkins II, and continuing with Perkins III and IV, money was allocated in the form of a grant to all local institutions on the basis of a funding formula rather than by requesting proposals.

Also in 1991 Act 1244 established the Arkansas Technical and Community College System whereby the State's vocational technical schools became technical colleges, community colleges, or branches of four-year institutions and came under the purview of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Division of Vocational and Technical Education (DVTE) and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) was reached which provided for ADHE to assume responsibility for oversight of postsecondary Perkins funding.

In 1997, the Division of Vocational and Technical Education became the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE). The MOU remains in effect with ADHE administering postsecondary Perkins funds and ADWE administering secondary.