

PERKINS 101

Accountability

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, like most other federal education and workforce development legislation, expects positive outcomes in exchange for federal funding. The most recent version of the legislation, amended in 2018 and informally known as Perkins V, has an accountability system that is designed to assess the effectiveness of state and local funding recipients in improving the performance of CTE students and optimizing return on investment.

Each state must operationalize Perkins indicators of performance and set performance goals to work toward. Local school districts and postsecondary institutions work toward their own performance goals on these indicators with targets set in conjunction with the state.

CTE Concentrators

States and local recipients are required to report outcome data for students who spend a significant amount of time in CTE programs. These students are designated as “CTE concentrators.” The purpose of this designation is to ensure that students included in the accountability system have taken part in enough CTE coursework to benefit from that experience and to distinguish the measurement population from the general high school population, since many high school students enroll in at least some CTE. While states previously developed their own definitions of a CTE concentrator, Perkins V included for the first time a base definition of a CTE concentrator.

CTE Concentrator Definition:

- At the secondary school level, a student served by an eligible recipient who has completed at least two courses in a single career and technical education program or program of study.
- At the postsecondary level, a student enrolled in an eligible recipient who has—
 - earned at least 12 credits within a career and technical education program or program of study; or
 - completed such a program if the program encompasses fewer than 12 credits or the equivalent in total.

States still must make a number of decisions about implementing these definitions, including how terms like credit and course are defined, what is included in a program of study, and how concentrator status is assigned, so there is significant variation in the operationalization of concentrator definitions across states, particularly at the secondary level.

Indicators of Performance

Annually, each local recipient must report the number of CTE participants (students who take one CTE course) and the number of CTE concentrators, as well as CTE concentrators' performance on the following indicators, to the state, depending on their learner level – secondary recipients report on the secondary indicators and postsecondary recipients on the postsecondary indicators. Each state reports CTE participant and concentrator enrollment and concentrator performance on these indicators to the federal government.

Postsecondary

At the postsecondary level, there are three required performance indicators:

- **1P1: Postsecondary Placement:** The percentage of CTE concentrators who, during the second quarter after program completion, are participating in any one of the following activities:
 - postsecondary education
 - advanced training (such as an apprenticeship)
 - military service
 - a service program under the National and Community Service Act or the Peace Corps
 - employment
- **2P1: Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential:** The percentage of CTE concentrators who receive a [recognized postsecondary credential](#) (including an industry certification, license, postsecondary certificate or degree) during participation in or within one year of program completion.
- **3P1: Non-traditional Program Concentration:** The percentage of CTE concentrators in CTE programs that lead to occupations in non-traditional fields (fields in which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of those employed, such as men in nursing or women in welding).

Secondary

All secondary Perkins grant recipients must report on the following:

- **1S1: Four-year Graduation Rate:** The percentage of CTE concentrators who graduate high school, as measured by the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defined in the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#).
- **2S1: Academic Proficiency in Reading/Language Arts:** The percentage of CTE concentrators obtaining proficiency in the challenging State academic standards adopted by the State under ESEA, as measured by the academic assessments in reading/language arts required by that Act.
- **2S2: Academic Proficiency in Mathematics:** The percentage of CTE concentrators obtaining proficiency in the challenging State academic standards adopted by the State under ESEA, as measured by the academic assessments in mathematics required by that Act.
- **2S3: Academic Proficiency in Science:** The percentage of CTE concentrators obtaining proficiency in the challenging State academic standards adopted by the State under ESEA, as measured by the academic assessments in science required by that Act.
- **3S1: Post-program Placement:** The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the second quarter after exiting from secondary education, are participating in any one of the following activities:
 - postsecondary education
 - advanced training (such as an apprenticeship)
 - military service
 - a service program under the National and Community Service Act or the Peace Corps
 - employment

- **4S1: Non-traditional Program Concentration:** The percentage of CTE concentrators in CTE programs that lead to occupations in non-traditional fields (fields in which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of those employed, such as men in nursing or women in welding).

In addition, states may choose to report on an additional measure, an **extended-year graduation rate (1S2)**, which is the percentage of CTE concentrators who graduate high school, as measured by the extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate defined in ESEA.

Finally, Perkins V introduced a new set of program quality indicators for the secondary level. At the beginning of Perkins V, states selected at least one of the following three measures to report on each year:

- **5S1: Program Quality – Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential:** The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained a [recognized postsecondary credential](#).
- **5S2: Program Quality – Attained Postsecondary Credits:** The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained postsecondary credits in the relevant CTE program earned through dual or concurrent enrollment or another credit transfer agreement.
- **5S3: Program Quality – Participated in Work-Based Learning:** The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having participated in [work-based learning](#).

In addition to requiring at least one of the above measures, states may choose to report on other measures from this set or a different program quality indicator of the state's choosing.

Setting Performance Targets

While developing their Perkins V state plan in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, each state set annual performance targets for four years for each of the relevant indicators above. The target is generally the percentage of CTE concentrators the state expects to meet the performance indicator for each measure. These targets are required to align with the goals of the state plan and be ambitious enough to ensure continuous progress toward improving the performance of CTE students overall and of specific learner populations. The targets must have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and are subject to public comment.

These state-determined performance levels can be updated under certain circumstances, and if the law is not reauthorized after four years, which was the case, states add targets for additional years. Some states have been adding additional targets one year at a time. Other states have submitted new, full Perkins plans with four years of additional targets. Ultimately, the U.S. Secretary of Education is responsible for approving state targets but must do so if they meet the basic requirements laid out in the law.

Local recipients either accept the state-determined performance levels as their own local performance levels or negotiate different performance targets. States have discretion in how local target setting is implemented so there is significant variation across the country.

Data Reporting and Dissemination

Each state determines how it will collect and compile data from its local secondary and postsecondary recipients following the end of each school year. States report statewide enrollment and outcomes to the federal government by January 31st of the following year through the [Consolidated Annual Report \(CAR\)](#).

In addition to reporting aggregate performance, performance data must be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, migrant status (reported on the secondary level only to align with ESEA) and by nine [special populations](#) laid out in the law. Data must also be disaggregated by Career Cluster. However, funding recipients are only held accountable for overall student performance.

Once reported, states also are required to publish their overall performance levels and disaggregated data publicly through user-friendly formats that are appropriate and accessible to students, parents and educators. Local grant recipients must publish their local data in similar ways.

Accountability for Results

After data are reported, actual results are compared to performance targets. If a state or local recipient does not achieve at least 90% of their performance targets in a given year, they must develop an improvement plan. If a recipient fails to improve in the two years after developing an improvement plan, this could result in sanctions, including the federal government or states withholding funding.

Learn More

To learn more about the topics addressed in this brief, consult the following resources:

- [Perkins 101: Introduction to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins 101: Federal Funding](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins 101: Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins V: The Official Guide to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (ACTE, 2018)
- [Consolidated Annual Report Guide](#) (U.S. Department of Education)
- [Collecting and Analyzing Data for the Secondary Program Quality Indicators in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006](#) (U.S. Department of Education, 2022)
- [Measuring Secondary CTE Program Quality](#) (Advance CTE, 2019)
- [Perkins V Data and Accountability Resources](#) (Advance CTE)