Career & Technical Education (Perkins V)

SACS Resource 3550

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) is a major federal law that provides approximately $1.4 billion annually to support career and technical education (CTE) programs across the United States. In California, these funds are administered by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), providing over $110 million each year to local schools and colleges for California's career pathways.

- Application Deadline: Returning LEAs must typically submit their application via the Perkins Grant Management System (PGMS) by June 1 annually.
- New Applicants: LEAs wishing to apply for the first time for the July 2027 cycle must submit an Intent to Apply by January 31, 2027.
- Resource Code: Use SACS Resource 3550 for Vocational Education Basic Grants.

Core Objectives of Perkins V

Perkins V aims to develop the academic, technical, and employability skills of students through high-quality programs of study.

- Programs of Study: It prioritizes a non-duplicative, coordinated sequence of courses that link secondary and postsecondary education and lead to recognized credentials.
- Labor Market Alignment: Funding must support programs aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.
- Focus on Equity: The law requires states to prioritize the performance of "special populations," including English learners, individuals with disabilities, and foster youth.

Required Uses of Funds

To receive funding, local educational agencies (LEAs) must address six specific areas in their required Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA):

1. Career Exploration: Providing guidance and counseling on career and postsecondary options as early as 5th grade.
2. Professional Development: Training for teachers, faculty, administrators, and school counselors.
3. Skills Development: Ensuring students acquire the technical and academic skills necessary for their field.
4. Program Implementation: Developing, coordinating, and improving CTE programs.
5. Performance Assessment: Monitoring student performance and accountability indicators.
6. Closing Gaps: Implementing activities to improve access and equity for underserved student groups.

California Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) must report on several sets of performance indicators depending on the grant program. These metrics are generally categorized into

student engagement, achievement, and transition.

Perkins V in 5th Grade (NEW)

Under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), federal funds can now be used for students as young as fifth grade. This represents a significant change from the previous version of the law (Perkins IV), which generally limited funding to students in the "middle grades" (defined as starting in seventh grade) and above.

Federal law permits Perkins V funds for career exploration and technical education starting in 5th grade, though states set their own grade-level limits. Around 90% of states allow these funds for middle grades (5-8), with about half (49%) specifically starting at grade 5. Funds primarily support career exploration for younger students. The official resource for state plans is the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network (PCRN), managed by the U.S. Department of Education.

Key Provisions for California Schools

- Funding for Improvement: Provides financial support to develop, coordinate, and enhance secondary and postsecondary CTE programs.
- System Alignment: Mandates collaboration between middle and high schools, higher education institutions, and employers to create seamless pathways.
- Equity and Access: Requires states to prioritize the performance of "special populations," including students with disabilities, English learners, and those from economically disadvantaged families.
- Integrated Professional Development: Prioritizes joint professional development for core academic and CTE teachers to better integrate rigorous instruction.
- State Priorities: In California, these funds are leveraged to ensure CTE is demand-driven and responds to regional workforce needs while improving student outcomes.

Funding School Counseling Positions and Professional Development

Perkins V (the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act) provides funding for both school counselor positions and professional development, provided the roles and activities are directly tied to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

1. Funding for Counselor Positions

Perkins V funds can be used to pay for the salaries and benefits of career guidance and academic counselors, but with specific restrictions:

- CTE Focus: The counselor's primary role must be to provide information on postsecondary education and career options specifically for students enrolled in qualified CTE programs.
- Supplement, Not Supplant: Federal funds cannot be used to pay for counselor positions that were previously funded by state or local dollars. They must be used to provide "something extra" rather than day-to-day operational costs.

- Proportional Funding: If a counselor serves both CTE and non-CTE students, Perkins funds can typically only cover the portion of their salary dedicated to CTE-specific activities.

2. Professional Development

Professional development is a required use of funds under Section 135 of the Act. Eligible recipients must provide training for personnel, including career guidance and academic counselors, that focuses on:

- Industry Knowledge: Advancing skills and understanding of all aspects of an industry, including the latest workplace technologies and standards.
- Career Exploration: Developing systematic frameworks for career exploration and informed decision-making for students.
- Integration: Learning how to better integrate academic and technical standards into CTE curriculum.

Important Constraints

- Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA): All expenditures, including staffing and training, must be directly justified by the results of the local needs assessment.
- Administrative Cap: No more than 5% of the local award may be used for administrative purposes, which may limit how certain support roles are classified.

Important Deadlines for LEAs

- Application for Funding: Due annually by June 1 via the Perkins Grant Management System (PGMS).
- New/Returning Applicants: Must submit an Intent to Apply form by January 31 to receive funds starting the following July.
- July 15, 2026: Deadline to address all required ESSA provisions in the LCAP Federal Addendum to remain eligible for Title funds.
- September 30, 2027: The final obligation date for many federal funds (including Title III) under the Tydings Amendment.