

INTRODUCTION

California is the most populous of the states, and, as the eighth largest economy in an increasingly complex and competitive world, has a unique responsibility – and opportunity – to reshape and revitalize the role of career technical education (CTE) as an engine of education reform and workforce and economic development for the state. Powerful and persistent demographic, economic, and educational trends have created a “perfect storm” for CTE. This, combined with a variety of California’s recent strategic workforce development plans and programs, offers both new challenges and possibilities in preparing the state’s workforce for the future. The development of this new state plan for CTE is a key part of the state’s more wide-ranging effort to create a world-class CTE system that can strengthen the education and workforce preparation available to all Californians.

This plan is intended to serve as a catalyst to further discussion about the content and delivery of CTE and how it fits into the state’s broader educational and workforce development contexts. Statewide, CTE is supported through numerous funding streams and implemented through diverse programs. Perkins funding represents only approximately 7 percent of funds invested in California CTE programs. Despite this relatively small percentage, Perkins funds serve as an important lever for improving secondary and postsecondary CTE to better engage students in learning and to meet critical workforce demands. It is anticipated that the development of this plan will not only meet the requirements of Perkins IV, but lay the foundation for a broader master plan that will weave these funding streams and programs together into a fully articulated and integrated CTE system.

This introduction discusses the new priorities of the state plan and the inclusive stakeholder process that contributed to its development.

Expanded Priorities

As in past years, the Perkins Act centers on the improvement of secondary and postsecondary courses and programs that are intended to build the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences needed to enter and succeed in the world of work. More than in previous versions, the current Perkins Act moves the CTE system in some new directions, as specified in its expanded priorities. They are:¹

- » Developing challenging academic and technical standards and assisting students in meeting such standards, including preparation for high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations in current or emerging professions.

¹ The Association of Career and Technical Education. Retrieved July 1, 2007, from <http://actonline.org>

- » Promoting the development of services and activities that integrate rigorous, challenging academic and career technical instruction, and link secondary education and postsecondary education for participating career and technical students.
- » Increasing state and local flexibility in providing services and activities designed to develop, implement, and improve CTE, including Tech Prep education.
- » Conducting and disseminating national research and disseminating information on best practices that improve CTE programs, services, and activities.
- » Providing technical assistance that promotes leadership, initial preparation, and professional development at the state and local levels; and that improves the quality of CTE teachers, faculty, administrators, and counselors.
- » Supporting partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, area career and technical education schools, local workforce investment boards, business and industry, and intermediaries.
- » Providing individuals with opportunities throughout their lifetimes to develop, in conjunction with other education and training programs, the knowledge and skills needed to keep the United States competitive.

Given the scope and breadth of this plan, and its responsiveness to the California context, the following additional state priorities set this plan apart from previous submissions:

- » Ensuring that CTE is woven into the fabric of education in California, preparing all students for their future endeavors, rather than being seen as a separate system of education.
- » Building a demand-driven CTE system by responding to real workforce development needs and state, regional, and local labor market realities and priorities, through strengthened curricula, professional development, data collection and use, and direct linkages with business and industry.
- » Ensuring that all students have access to CTE courses, pathways and programs of interest; highly skilled instructors; and facilities and technologies that make all CTE options available regardless of location and enrollment limits.
- » Realizing the concept of lifelong learning, spanning from early childhood through adulthood's many transitions, in ways that promote career awareness and management as appropriate throughout the continuum.
- » Leveraging the current momentum of high school reform, with its renewed focus on rigor, relevance, relationships, and results, to promote CTE as a means to engage students, instill a passion for learning, and improve student outcomes.

- » Viewing CTE systemically by taking a broad perspective in planning for how CTE from kindergarten through lifelong learning can contribute to California's economic future, rather than focusing on discrete secondary or postsecondary programs or specific funding streams.
- » Promoting evidence-based continuous improvement of CTE services and impact through better alignment of standards, curricula, assessments, and professional development, and support for schools and colleges to achieve all of the state-established core indicator levels of performance for academic and technical skills achievement.

The Process for Developing the State Plan

Developing a CTE plan for a state as vast and diverse as California requires a broad range of expertise and knowledge, as well as access to data from a number of sources. Planning began even before the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, when the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) jointly commissioned WestEd, a nonprofit educational research and development agency, to conduct a statewide needs assessment of California's CTE system. This 2006 study, which brought together current data from multiple published sources, surveys of CTE practitioners, and interviews with CTE stakeholders, including industry representatives and students, served as the point of departure for the next stage of formal input, which began in January 2007 with the creation of a CTE Resource Group.

California's CTE Resource Group, a broad-based group of representative stakeholders identified by CDE and CCCCCO, provided structured input on the development of the state plan and created a shared and comprehensive vision of a statewide CTE system.² CDE and CCCCCO commissioned a number of working papers to provide background for the Resource Group. Research-based information about the state's economy, workforce needs, CTE structure and status, and the requirements of the new Perkins Act laid the groundwork for this stage of the input process, which consisted of three two-day meetings held February 5-6, 2007, March 28-29, 2007, and May 30-31, 2007. The first meeting primarily focused on drafting a shared vision for the state's CTE system and developing an agreed upon mission statement and guiding principles for implementing CTE. At the second meeting, members of the Resource Group developed CTE system goals, and focused on strategies to improve equity and access, develop demand-driven programs, and strengthen CTE in the following eight areas: high-quality instructional programs, industry partnerships, career guidance, system alignment, student support services, faculty supply and quality, assessment and evaluation issues, and services to

² A list of members of the Resource Group is included in Appendix D.

incumbent workers and lifelong learning. In the final meeting, the Resource Group addressed alignment and evaluation and accountability in greater depth and concluded with a discussion on the promotion of CTE to key target audiences.

Following the Resource Group meetings, members received summaries of their work and were given opportunities to make revisions. Recommendations from the Resource Group were conveyed to the Joint Advisory Committee for Career Technical Education (JACCTE) for approval. The JACCTE, comprising equal numbers of representatives of the State Board of Education and the Community College Board of Governors,³ serves as the joint policy body that makes recommendations to the two boards regarding all aspects of coordinated delivery of CTE in the state. Approved JACCTE recommendations have been incorporated into the plan.

Additionally, public input to the plan was elicited through four on-site public hearings held on September 7, 14, 17, and 24, 2007, which were also available via Webcast, allowing for participation of stakeholders from their personal computers. The public was notified through established CDE and CCCCCO networks and through more than 90 professional associations and CTE-related organizations comprising CTE and non-CTE educators, workforce and economic development professionals, industry representatives, parents and students. In August 2007, a draft of the state plan was posted on www.wested.org/cteplan for public review.

A summary of the comments and recommendations from these hearings is included in Appendix C. CDE and CCCCCO staff considered all recommendations; the recommendations were then either integrated into drafts of the plan for consideration by the JACCTE or not included due to incompatibility with state goals or Perkins IV requirements.

Chapter One of the plan, which follows, describes California's current CTE delivery system and enrollment status. This chapter, together with Chapter Two, which discusses the demographic, economic, educational, and policy context for CTE in California, provides the backdrop for the vision, mission, goals, and strategies for strengthening the CTE system proposed in Chapter Three.

³ A list of members of the JACCTE is included in Appendix D.