



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

128 - 10th Avenue, S.W. • PO Box 43105 • Olympia, WA 98504-3105
Phone: (360) 709-4600 • Fax: (360) 586-5862 • Web: www.wtb.wa.gov • Email: workforce@wtb.wa.gov

December 19, 2024

Miguel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202w
RE: Docket ED-2024-SCC-0112: Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request; Carl D. Perkins
Career and Technical Education Act Consolidated Annual Report

Dear Secretary Cardona,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), state administrator of the Carl D. Perkins grant program (Perkins) to provide my comments on the proposed changes to the Perkins V State Plan Guide and related data reporting requirements, as announced in the Federal Register in January 2024. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspectives and concerns regarding these significant changes.

The Workforce Board has been actively engaged in advocating for effective and equitable career and technical education (CTE) programs. We recognize the importance of the Perkins V State Plan in shaping the future of CTE and ensuring that it meets the needs of both students and the labor market.

The proposed changes, as outlined in the Information Collection Request (ICR), range from minor technical adjustments to substantial modifications that will impact every state and territory. We understand that these changes are intended to support future regulation and improve data quality and reporting. However, we have several concerns that we believe need to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of these changes with the least amount of undue burden placed on the states.

General Considerations and Concerns of the Department of Education's Notices

The Workforce Board has identified several key themes and concerns from the public response to the Department of Education's two notices published on the Federal Register. These notices outline significant changes to the existing Perkins V State Plan Guide and related requirements for data and informational reporting under the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR).

1. **Timing of the Changes Disrupts Standard Procedures.** The proposed changes create a significant new state and local level administrative burden that is impractical and unnecessary at this stage in Perkins V implementation, especially following the recent four-year planning process. This process will place a significant administrative burden on states and local entities, which may hinder their ability to focus on program improvement and student outcomes.

The time to regulate or make substantial changes to the way the law is implemented would have been immediately after Perkins V passage in 2018, or if deemed essential, aligned with the four-year planning cycle dictated by the law. Changes of this significance pose significant challenges and strain on resources given Washington just completed a new four-year planning cycle. The proposed timeline for adopting these changes (PY26) creates a significant new state and local administrative burden (necessitating broad stakeholder engagement, public comment periods, and public hearings) that is impractical and unnecessary at this stage in the law's implementation. Given the current capabilities of our data collection systems, Washington would also not be able to implement the array of proposed changes within this timeline.

The exact amount of FTE time and expense is difficult to impossible to calculate without knowledge of the exact changes that will be implemented, but as currently suggested they would be substantial and would far exceed the Department of Education estimates. The initial and ongoing tasks that would require additional resources to implement these proposed changes include, but are not limited to:

- Planning and preparation which involves outlining a timeline, deadlines, coordination of the planning and writing team.
 - Budget management including allocation of resources for staff, meeting logistics, public notices, and materials.
 - State workforce partner engagement, collaboration, and feedback.
 - Statewide stakeholder familiarization with new parameters and requirements.
 - Additional public comment period administration which includes date setting, publicizing, creating materials and collecting comments.
 - Development of new data sets and data collection methods.
 - Coordinating internal reviews and incorporating public comment into plan revisions
 - Plan submission, distribution and outcome tracking
2. **Data Actionability:** The proposed changes make Perkins V data less actionable and useful for timely program improvement, appearing to focus more on streamlining federal data collection and reporting efforts. The proposed legislative changes to data collection and reporting requirements threaten our ability to evaluate the long-term impacts of Perkins V-funded programs on students, including vital subgroups and special populations. Without consistent data, policymakers at both state and federal levels will lose the ability to compare future trends with past program years, hindering our capacity to implement policies that support high-quality career and technical education (CTE). This change jeopardizes our commitment to improving educational outcomes and equitable access for all students. The changes also undermine current racial equity priorities by hindering the ability to evaluate the long-term impact of Perkins V on student subgroups and special populations.

In addition, the proposed regulations present several concerns regarding their impact on state accountability and program innovation. Specifically, by requiring states to adopt at least one program quality indicator (PQI), the ICRs may discourage states from using multiple PQIs, which were previously encouraged by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the information requested on optional processes or efforts, such as support for middle

grades CTE programming, could create disincentives for states to maintain or expand these initiatives to avoid potential regulatory scrutiny.

3. **Alignment with Other Systems:** The proposed regulations present several concerns regarding their alignment with existing federal workforce and education programs and could inadvertently undermine Washington's intentional efforts to closely align the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Perkins V. By disrupting the synchronicity of state planning cycles, these alterations disincentivize the submission of combined state plans, which are essential for fulfilling the planning requirements of multiple federal programs. Furthermore, the requirement for states to describe industry-recognition of credentials deviates from the statutory definition in WIOA, further weakening the alignment with other national initiatives. Similarly, the introduction of a new definition for industry recognized credentials solely for Perkins V further complicates the situation, as it is not defined in federal law. This is particularly problematic for Washington state, which submits a combined plan incorporating both Perkins and WIOA into its four-year workforce development plan.
4. **Technical Assistance and Monitoring:** Technical assistance and monitoring are more appropriate strategies for ensuring data quality and supporting Department of Education oversight of Perkins V implementation, as acknowledged in the ICR justification.

Concerns related to Proposed Revisions to the Guide for the Submission of State Plans

The Workforce Board also has numerous concerns regarding proposed changes to specific areas and definitions within the plan requirements.

1. New definitions for Size, Scope and Quality.

The introduction of new definitions and requirements for state plans, such as those for size, scope, and quality (SSQ), high-skill/high-wage designations, and middle grades support, is a noteworthy development. While we recognize the importance of clear and consistent definitions, we believe that the proposed requirements may not fully account for local and regional variations in labor market needs and economic conditions. It is crucial that any new definitions are flexible enough to accommodate these differences and support the unique needs of our state's workforce.

2. New requirements for state definitions for High-wage, high-skill, in-demand jobs.

We are concerned that the proposal does not fully acknowledge the role of local and regional variations in high-skill and high-wage designations. There is also no guidance on the implications how Perkins definitions for this category relate to those from other federal policy proposals.

3. Middle grades

This proposed change would align the definition with ESSA definition of middle grades (grades 5-8). Washington currently offers CTE courses down to grade 7. However, the state does not currently operate a system that can collect data down to the middle grades (grades 7 and 8). Implementing these changes would require substantial changes in the data collection systems.

4. Meaningful progress

The proposed changes to the accountability measures, including the definition of "meaningful progress" and the alignment of state-determined levels of performance (SDLPs), raise questions about the potential impact on state reporting and compliance efforts. We urge the Department of Education to consider the existing criteria and requirements under the current Perkins V state plan guide and to avoid redundant or overly prescriptive mandates.

5. Industry validation of credentials

We also have concerns about the proposed changes related to the validation of industry-recognized credentials and the attainment of postsecondary credits. The ICR requests detailed information on state processes for determining industry recognition and the specific number of postsecondary credits required for CTE concentrators. We believe that these requirements may impose additional administrative burdens on states and local education agencies, potentially diverting resources away from direct support for students and programs.

Concerns Related to Proposed Changes in Reporting Requirements for the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR)

1. Changes to policies and procedures for identifying and validating CTE concentrators.

This will increase the burden on both secondary and postsecondary institutions, requiring increased frequency of validation. The proposed changes to performance indicators, such as the inclusion of all CTE concentrators regardless of completion status and the shift to an "exit" cohort approach, may reduce the alignment and coordination with other education and workforce systems. This misalignment could undermine the ability to evaluate the long-term impact of Perkins V on student subgroups and special populations.

2. Performance Indicators

The proposed changes to each of the performance indicators, including changes to each numerator and denominator, will create a significant burden on state secondary and postsecondary CTE administrators, as well as for local recipients. The degree of effort required to comply with these new requirements will differ for each indicator.

3. Reporting requirements

Additionally, the proposed changes to the CAR reporting requirements, including the disaggregation of placement data and the focus on high-skill, high-wage sectors, may create challenges for states with less sophisticated data systems. The longer reporting period may also reduce the utility of the data for timely program improvement.

4. Impacts on local Grants

The Workforce Board is concerned about the potential impact of the proposed changes on local workforce development programs. The new in-state requirements for data reporting will likely require significant adjustments from local school districts and other Perkins V grantees, as they may need to track and obtain data in new or different ways.

Additionally, the changes may lead to renegotiations of local performance targets and could accelerate the elimination of certain local programs. The focus on statewide processes and procedures for ensuring compliance may also conflict with the concept of local control in some states such as Washington. We believe that these changes could have significant capacity and opportunity costs for local workforce development programs.

In conclusion, while we support the overall goal of improving the Perkins V program, we urge the Department of Education to carefully consider the potential challenges and burdens associated with these proposed changes. It is essential to strike a balance between enhancing program effectiveness and ensuring that states can implement these changes without undue hardship.

Thank you for considering our comments. I look forward to seeing how the Department of Education addresses these important issues.



Eleni Papadakis
Executive Director

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board