

# Considerations with Federal Perkins Grant Funding

## Introduction

College and Careers work in our schools, along with Work-Based Learning Programs, often are held in separate spaces from Career and Technical Education, but directly overlap. Some school districts put all of these initiatives under one roof, and others separate them a bit because of the grant funding mechanisms that take place. Whatever the case, Federal Perkins Law most certainly has a place for Work Based Learning initiatives in the PaCE Framework that the state of Illinois has implemented through the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act of 2016.

Perkins Legislation is implemented at the Federal level and is in the fifth series of changes over the years of its implementation. That is why it is commonly referred to as Perkins V, for the Roman numeral five. Perkins V has followed a steady change over the years to focus on nine main concepts that impact Work-Based Learning in our schools. These concepts fall into the following categories.

- Development and Engagement of Career Programs
  1. Career Technical Competencies and Essential Skills
  2. Academic Instruction and Support
  3. CTE Teacher Recruitment and Access
  4. Instructional Sequence
  5. Work-Based Learning
  6. Instructor Professional Development
  7. Facilities and Equipment Upgrades
  8. Continuous Improvement

Perkins V funding is given to the state of Illinois, and like many other states, we place dollars that match the federal funding to double down on the effectiveness of our Career and Technical Programs. This money goes directly to a few organizations at the Post Secondary level, Work Based Community Programming, and regions of the state known as EFEs, or Education for Employment Regional Delivery Systems.

EFE's are region based, and work with multiple secondary and middle school districts to use the money given by Perkins V to implement career programming in Illinois schools. We

covered EFE's as a topic of conversation in Module 3, so if you need to review some of that information moving forward, please do so.

### **Funding Brainstorm**

Every school and district has various needs in career programming around the nine basic principles laid out in Perkins V. We are going to cover ways you can brainstorm ideas on supporting those nine topics in order to meet your Perkins V requirements and fulfill the goals and objectives of both your district needs, your EFE, and Federal goals.

### **Development and Engagement**

Ask yourself as a teacher or coordinator what your school is doing and what it is not doing around developing high functioning programs in your region. At times, districts like to spend money on special projects that don't always align to Perkins or the EFE goals set forth in the Perkins Legislation. These types of projects, while often valuable, are not meant to use Federal dollars through Perkins if they don't meet the goals set forth through the legislation. For example, let's think about a community school that wants to build a curricular program around home and family, and wants to start "Introduction to Knitting." While this programming can be valuable in certain areas across the United States where corporations have a need for skilled labor in this work, many communities do not need this type of programming. However, the school district had a teacher who just absolutely loved knitting, and wanted to share her love and passion for the skill. Again, while not diminishing the usefulness of such skill, the school would need to show that there is some sort of economic benefit to the community through career openings and projections in order to put forth federal Perkins funding to such course development.

Development of these types of programs should start with conversations with CTE directors, WBL and Pathway Teachers, community stakeholders, and industry specific people who can help show there is a direct correlation or need in that field. Dollars from the grant can be used to investigate such ideas by going to industry specific conferences, provide programming for development of curriculum, teacher training, teacher externships, and other developmental ideas of such programs.

### **Career Technical Competencies and Essential Skills**

By now, everyone participating in the asynchronous work knows the importance of these skills being utilized everyday in our classrooms and WBL experiences. Perkins identifies this as a key part of its work and can provide funding in a host of ways.

- Providing dollars for specific trainings on Essential and Technical Skills

- Providing dollars to pull teachers to witness other “teachers” delivering these skills to students in other settings
- Providing dollars to programs focused on a specific skill set, where they can buy equipment to match that skill set
- Attending conferences that offer workshops
- Purchasing student software that focus on these skills for CTE courses
- Providing payment to an outside vendor who assists schools with training or student development around these schools

### **Academic Instruction and Support**

Instructional support is key for Perkins V for a host of reasons. One main reason it has been identified as a major principle in CTE is the very fact that many CTE teachers come to teaching from a different avenue. Many CTE teachers started their careers as tradesmen and women, nurses, caretakers, farmers, electricians, IT specialists and a host of careers along multiple spectrums. The value they bring to our students cannot be overstated. They have the knowledge and skills to prepare our students in Illinois for future careers of the 21st century. While they bring great value to the classroom through their real life career experiences, we know that they may not have completed education coursework or may not have been involved in pedagogical theory. These individuals have been teaching/training others related to their career skills in the field, but, similar to many traditional teachers, may benefit from helping grow knowledge with pedagogy and best practices related to teaching children and young adults.

Academic and instruction dollars related to the Perkins grant are meant to address the need of ongoing professional learning. These dollars can be used in a host of ways to assist CTE teachers in learning the basics of teaching and growing as a career professional in their field. They include the following ways dollars can be spent:

- Attending trainings on Authentic Learning, Project Based Learning or Problem Based Learning strategies
- Attending workshops or educational experiences that focus on curriculum and instruction
  - Curriculum development
  - Curriculum planning sessions
  - Co-curricular initiatives with teachers in the same district or EFE region

- Assessment trainings and workshops
  - Classroom environment professional development
  - Others
- Items or equipment that focus on instructional strategies
  - Smartboards
  - View Cameras
  - Software
  - Instructional supports for Special Education students
  - Instructional materials (not books used as primary instructional materials)
- Trainings, Materials and Development along these ideas
  - Reflection activities used in classrooms
  - [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging](#) instructional components
  - SEL instructional materials
  - Literacy strategies
  - Numeracy strategies
- Curriculum alignment with Numeracy and Literacy
  - Eg. Creating an Engineering course to align with Geometry
- Team-Based Challenges implementation into courses
  - Working with CTSOs to bring these experiences in classes
  - Equity trainings with this work
- Teacher Externships focusing on curriculum and instructional strategies (note: this is an option to use grant funding to provide current CTE teachers, regardless of background, with externship opportunities to expand their knowledge and ability to teach CTE topics.)
- PaCE Framework development that aligns to CTE
- And much more!!

## **CTE Teacher Recruitment and Access**

Finding well qualified teachers in general education can be tough with the current status of education. Finding highly qualified people from industry can be difficult two-fold. One, it is hard to get someone to step away from a career that they love so much in order to come to the education side that often pays less or doesn't have the incentive structures of the private sector. Secondly, educators and non-educators alike recognize that teaching is challenging work.

Finding the right individuals that match in a fashion who understand youth, love educating others, and have the communication and social skills to work with young people is like finding a "diamond in the rough." While it is hard to find these people, it is not impossible; it is even more doable with the help of Perkins funding. School districts can use the money they get from EFE's to recruit industry professionals, hold special events or networking opportunities to attract potential candidates, and work to create environments that attract new teachers to the field.

Going a step further, CTE Perkins dollars can be used to provide access to individuals classified as nontraditional in certain fields to join the profession as well. For example, finding a male nurse or a female engineer both fall in line with this work. Working with individuals of certain races or cultures in fields dominated by Caucasians or working with someone from the LGBTQ community to offer programming and access, also fall in line with goal four under the Perkins V legislation. Working with your EFE on these ideas is highly recommended because they might have contacts in certain industries that would consider a potential career in education, or talk to people in industry to network and identify potential candidates.

## **Instructional Sequence**

As most of the educators in CTE know, instructional sequence is important in any coursework to build skills that are based on bottom to top pedagogical approaches. For example, in order to do my job to the highest possible ability in masonry work, I need to first understand some of the basic principles in masonry techniques, tools, tool use, and safety. I won't be able to do my job effectively if I don't understand these basic principles. However, there are two types of instructional sequence work we need to look at to understand the full picture of this goal.

The example of the masonry work above is an example of low level instructional sequence work that is based on regular classroom instruction. This work is evident in every career pathway in CTE, and can produce curriculum, activities and instructional work that makes learning priority one. Teachers often need time to build this sequence of work by creating a

unit structure based on skills that are properly assessed in various ways. While this work may seem like it is more in line with curriculum development, found more generally in academic instruction, it can be utilized under goal number five.

Higher level instructional sequence is often determined at the CTE director or WBL learning coordinator position and includes work related to Post-Secondary relationships, CTE course CIP program development, and alignment of PaCE Framework in our CTE courses.

Building Post-secondary relationships with local community colleges is key to the College and Career Pathway Endorsement work initiated at the state level. Part of that work was founded in the Postsecondary Workforce Act in 2016, but was also added in follow up legislation. Schools who want to offer a Career Pathway Endorsement to graduating seniors on their diploma must fit certain guidelines. These guidelines have been developed by ISBE and must follow an application process to get their endorsement approved by the state. CTE departments who have aligned their work to College and Career Pathway Endorsements can use grant monies in some of the following ways:

- Attending trainings and conferences following endorsement procedures
- Using money to bring in trainers or collaborate with private groups
- Pay substitute teachers while trainings take place
- Work with EFEs to strategize best practices in College and Careers
- Use dollars to meet the requirements of College and Career Pathway Endorsements

\*The ISBE CTE Professional Learning Calendar offers numerous opportunities each year (for free) to Illinois educators; these professional learning opportunities are delivered by the NIU Illinois CTE Project Team.. You can often fulfill these goals without spending large amounts of money thanks to their relationships with ISBE. Links to the most up-to-date ISBE CTE Professional learning calendars can be accessed through your EFE Director and seen in various ISBE and Illinois P-20 Network communications.

Other Higher level instructional sequence work could be around building courses and curriculum for a Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP). A CIP is a code produced by ISBE that aligns to Federal Career Programs. CIPs are generally 2-3 courses long that offer varied and tiered training, teaching and learning in a certain career program. CIPs can often change with various industry and business changes in the economy. For instance, a local community may have had a major car factory in its region where community stakeholders identified there needed to school CIP courses aligned to the car manufacturing and mechanic shops. If the local economy changed and the environment with the car company depleted or became non-existent, it would make sense that the school would deplete

some or all of the resources in the Mechanic Shop CIP courses, and place them in another career field. This work can become endless with the changing business environments in a multinational business world. These programs take time, resources, training, curriculum and a host of other resources to build in a classroom setting. CTE Perkins V funding can address this need in collaboration with your local EFE director.

Finally, your PaCE Framework is a sequenced experience of events of classroom and non-classroom interactions that could fall under this work. However, it may also fall under Work-Based Learning under item six of the Perkins V grant. If you have questions on where your grant dollars are spent or where it fits in the Perkins V grant funding, work with your CTE Directors and EFE Directors to see where items may best fit.

### **Work-Based Learning**

Work-Based Learning in the past few years has had a lot of different meanings in different regions of the state and the country. Under Federal Perkins definitions provided by Federal Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education report titled Expanding Work-Based Learning Opportunities for Youth: Insights from the Field (2021), the report touched on some key ideas that fall in line with Perkins grant funding.

- Work-based learning is featured prominently in Perkins V as a strategy for preparing career and technical education(CTE) students for further learning and careers. WBL is a key component of the law's definition.
- Perkins V directs states to identify in their state plans how individuals who are members of special populations will be provided instruction and WBL opportunities in integrated settings that support competitive, integrated employment.
- Permits them to use state leadership funds to establish and expand WBL opportunities that are aligned to CTE programs and programs of study.
- Facilitate the inclusion of WBL opportunities including internships, externships, and simulated work environments, in CTE programs of study.
- Requires eligible recipients to describe in their applications for funds the WBL opportunities that they will provide to students participating in CTE programs and how they will work with representatives from employers to develop or expand WBL opportunities for CTE students.
- Providing a continuum of WBL opportunities, including simulated work environments, is also an authorized use of the funds by local recipients.

While these are just some examples of how WBL dollars can be spent at state, EFE, and school district levels, working with your local EFE can expand on these opportunities to match your dollars appropriately with Work-Based Learning guidelines.

### **Instructor Professional Development**

While some of the professional development opportunities have been covered in other areas, this area is specific to any CTE teacher in the state of Illinois. Illinois and the Federal government recognize that CTE teachers have a wealth of knowledge of their career fields. As someone spends more time in the teaching profession (and out of active work in the industry), new things come about in industry that may change the way they teach students. Recognizing that need, keeping your CTE educator trained in new practices and honing their skills in industry certifications is a great use of Perkins V funds.

These funds can also be used to develop their pedagogical, SEL, and professional needs. CTE teachers may need to work on curriculum training, pedagogical and instructional strategies, literacy and numeracy, and a host of other strategies based on their own school, district and EFE regional goals. Matching these training and professional development opportunities to fit the needs of your community and your teachers is key to the successful implementation of these monies in Perkins. Some EFE's recommend an annual training for CTE teachers as a part of their plans, where others work to ensure these professional development opportunities are rotated bi-annually. Whatever the case, as a CTE teacher and/or WBL coordinator, be sure to work with your CTE Director and EFE Director to see how these funds can impact you professionally.

Questions have arisen over the years if non-CTE teachers can access these dollars if they are working in collaboration with CTE teachers and initiatives. In these cases it is best to consult your local EFE director. In general, these dollars are reserved for Certified CTE teachers and staff.

### **Facilities and Equipment Upgrades**

One of the biggest budgetary factors going into Perkins V grants is often the facilities and equipment upgrades. CTE programs often have extremely costly equipment that can "eat up" your budget with a single purchase. Being strategic with your district, school and EFE on when to make these purchases or how to purchase equipment or facilities upgrades is an essential part of this work. Keeping in mind that large purchases can impact other components of fulfilling your Perkins V grant are important ideas to consider.

One way to approach this is to come up with some ideas around future purchases, professional development, and other major costs and see where they fit on a larger scale.



There are a lot of ways to do this, but one that has been successful is to draft up a Needs, Wants and Dreams Assessment.

Needs - items or facilities that must occur for the FY in order to maintain basic operations

Wants - items, software, tools or professional development that will make for high functioning CTE programming

Dreams - items, software, tools, full CTE staff professional development or major facilities upgrades that will bring about major systemic change for your school, district or region

### **Continuous Improvement**

Continuous improvement is a primary goal in Perkins V that demands rigorous evaluation of programs successes and weaknesses. Under the new rules established by Perkins V, states no longer have to negotiate performance levels with the U.S. Department of Education. States individually produce a statewide plan that is aligned through the work of the local regions led by EFE's. EFE Directors essentially are playing the role of the "middle man" between the state of Illinois and the districts they serve in monitoring continuous improvement of their programs. Hence, individual districts and schools have to monitor their performance levels in CTE through various measures including, but not limited to the following:

- Student credential data
- Student survey data
- Student enrollment
- Student success in career pathways and CIPs
- Teacher training
- Data related to non-traditional careers
- WBL experiences
- Spending and budgeting
- Assessment data
- Graduation percentages of CTE

While these are just a few areas that EFE directors look at, one of the key items for EFEs to evaluate at the school level is ensuring that programs are addressing the needs of nontraditional careers.

For example, a school in Gotham, IL has CTE classes in engineering, drafting and woodworking. They may have realized through student data that ninety percent of students in those classes are males, while the female population is merely ten percent. Using continuous improvement dollars could mean that the school could address this shortfall in a few various ways.

- Providing counselors extra time to plan a Women in Technology Forum
- Providing teachers with posters and media focusing around women in the trades
- Paying an outside agency or software company to provide training and software that include women as a primary recruitment target in these careers

Schools focused on these types of program costs would track data annually to see what kinds of changes to nontraditional population it would bring. Schools often need to disaggregate data to identify disparities. In smaller districts, money might be appropriate to pull teachers from these programs to discuss plans in student recruitment. Of course, providing the time to these teachers means substitutes will need to replace the teachers when they are not in the classroom. Otherwise, monies could be used over the summer to address this as well.

Remember that continuous improvement is almost always a data driven initiative to bring about systematic improvement in programs. Developing excel or google forms that track the data sets that your EFE needs is important to meet guidelines through the federal government.