

Carl D. Perkins
Career and Technical Education
Legislative Report
November 2024



Submitted by:

Office of Commissioner of Higher Education

In consultation with the Office of Public Instruction

On behalf of Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Update
Submitted By: Office of Commissioner of Higher Education
on Behalf of the Montana Board of Regents

Montana statute (§§ 20-7-330, MCA) requires that the Montana Board of Regents prepare a biennial report to the legislature on the results of interactions the Regents have had with the superintendent of public instruction, teachers, students, labor organizations, businesses, and institutions or agencies involved in vocational and career and technical education related to Montana’s State Plan for Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement. In Board of Regents Policy 272, the responsibility for those interactions and the subsequent report is delegated to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). In collaboration with its Partnering Agency, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), OCHE is engaged in interactions of this type daily.

This report provides a summary of the Carl D. Perkins grant expenditure highlights in the state of Montana, focusing on the most recently completed 2023-2024 grant cycle.

I. Background

The current legislation (The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, also referred to as Perkins V), which distributes over \$1.4 billion in federal funding to states to support career and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, has several priorities:

- Develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary and postsecondary students enrolled in CTE programs of study;
- Build on the efforts of states and localities to develop challenging academic and technical standards;
- Conduct technical assistance that promotes leadership and professional development to improve the quality of CTE teachers, faculty, administrators and counselors;
- Support partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, local workforce investment boards, and business and industry; and
- Provide individuals with the skills to keep the United States competitive.

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education is the designated State board to coordinate the development and submission of the state plan for career and technical education as required by The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). The state agencies responsible for career and technical education (CTE) in Montana are the Academic Research, and Student Affairs (ARSA) division of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Division of Career, Technical, and Adult Education of the Office of Public Instruction. Given their close coordination of activities, the State Plan and this report refer to the two agencies as the “Partner Agencies.”

II. Perkins V State Plan

The current Perkins State Plan was approved by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education in August 2024 and is in effect until June 2027.

Montana outlined the following State CTE vision: **Montana’s CTE programs will create opportunities for all students to become educated, highly skilled, and well-rounded individuals who can meet the economic and workforce needs of our state.**

In the state plan, Montana established four (4) goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce.

1. The Partner Agencies will work with local eligible agencies to ensure every student in Montana has access to quality career and technical education.
2. The Partner Agencies will align career and technical education programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels so that students who transition with a CTE pathway will be prepared to succeed.
3. State-level postsecondary and secondary staff will engage business and industry leaders throughout each grant cycle to ensure the career and technical education programs are effective in preparing a skilled workforce.
4. State-level postsecondary and secondary staff will expand access to, and ensure the quality of, work-based learning opportunities and early college access to all secondary students in Montana.

Montana plans to meet these goals with several strategies. Key strategies include:

- The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Office of Public Instruction commit to partnering with various State agencies, industry associations, and both public and private stakeholders to increase collaboration and increase the effectiveness of CTE programs. School CTE advisory boards, career exploration partnerships, engagement through the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, and assessment of credential value are all significant ways OCHE, OPI and local schools engage with business and industry partners to promote and communicate CTE pathways.
- The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Office of Public Instruction will continue to engage and participate with the Work-Based Learning Collaborative, a cross-section of public and private sector organizations with a stake in work-based learning, to enhance access to and the quality of work-based learning opportunities for Montana students.
- OCHE and OPI will continue to invest in innovative practices and technology that expands access to quality CTE for every student in Montana, supporting programs that provide both synchronous and asynchronous distance learning options, as well as

hybrid learning models. Programs that offer place-based learning with local partners benefit students and local economies.

- OCHE and OPI will also expand partnerships between secondary and postsecondary programs, encouraging more collaboration where possible and providing appropriate technical assistance to do so. We are committed to breaking down silos and sharing resources and opportunities between institutions that are regionally connected.

The Partner Agencies will continue to promote Montana Career Pathways, so students are aware of secondary CTE programs and activities, as well as options for postsecondary degrees and credentials that align to their pathway.

Highlights and significant updates from the State Plan include:

- Three performance indicator definitions have been updated to reflect current data collection abilities and practices, providing a more reliable and consistent method of measuring performance and progress. These include Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential and Participation in Work-Based Learning.
- The Montana Vision and Goals have been updated and simplified.
- The Work-Based Learning definition used for the purposes of administering the Perkins grant has been updated to reflect the State of Montana definition.
- The amount of funds allocated for State institutions increased from \$6,742 to \$13,485 per year. This funding allows incarcerated individuals in Montana to access quality career and technical education, leading to training and credentials that will lead to careers upon release.
- Increased the amount of funding allocated to the Reserve grant, a set-aside of local funding to support statewide priorities. The increase will be used to support statewide activities that support middle grades students in career exploration.

III. Updates for Postsecondary CTE programs

During the 2023-2024 grant cycle, OCHE continued working on building and expanding relationships between leadership at Montana's two-year, community and tribal colleges and local and statewide industry partners. Students and Montana's local economies benefit from these relationships as they lead to increased opportunities in apprenticeships, internships, and other valuable work-based learning experiences for students. It is vital for career and technical education programs to have input from industry and business representatives when building curriculum, updating classroom equipment, providing professional development for faculty, and creating assessments to test the skills learned in the classroom. Every Perkins-funded CTE program in Montana must have a corresponding advisory committee with business and industry representation to be eligible for the grant.

All Perkins recipients must also complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment and include the results of the assessment in their local application. The assessment includes:

- An evaluation of performance of the students served by the school, including an evaluation of performance for special populations and each subgroup described in section 1111(h)(1)©(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
- A description of how the CTE programs offered are sufficient in size, scope, and quality to meet the needs of all students; aligned to State, regional, Tribal, or local in-demand industry sectors or occupations as identified by the State workforce development board; and designed to meet local education or economic needs not identified by State or local workforce development boards.
- An evaluation of progress toward implementation of CTE programs and programs of study.
- A description of how the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of CTE teachers, faculty, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups underrepresented in such professions.
- A description of progress toward implementation of equal access to high-quality career and technical education courses and programs of study for all students, including strategies to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, the courses and programs for special populations; providing programs that are designed to enable special populations to meet the local levels of performance; and providing activities to prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings that will lead to self-sufficiency.

In conducting the comprehensive needs assessment, schools must involve a diverse body of stakeholders, including, at a minimum:

- Representatives of career and technical education programs in a local educational agency or educational service agency, including teachers, career guidance and academic counselors, principals and other school leaders, administrators, and specialized instructional support personnel and paraprofessionals.
- Representatives of career and technical education programs at postsecondary educational institutions, including faculty and administrators.
- Representatives of the State board or local workforce development boards and a range of local or regional businesses or industries.
- Parents and students.

- Representatives of special populations.
- Representatives of regional or local agencies serving out-of-school youth, homeless children and youth, and at-risk youth (as defined in section 1432 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).
- Representatives of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in the State, where applicable.
- Any other stakeholders that the eligible agency may require the eligible recipient to consult.

Additionally, schools receiving Perkins funds must also consult with stakeholders on an on-going basis. This may include consultation in order to:

- Provide input on annual updates to the comprehensive needs assessment.
- Ensure programs of study are; responsive to community employment needs; aligned with employment priorities in the State, regional, tribal, or local economy identified by employers, which may include in-demand industry sectors or occupations identified by the local workforce development board; informed by labor market information; designed to meet current, intermediate, or long-term labor market projections; and allow employer input, including input from industry or sector partnerships in the local area, where applicable, into the development and implementation of programs of study to ensure such programs of study align with skills required by local employment opportunities, including activities such as the identification of relevant standards, curriculum, industry-recognized credentials, and current technology and equipment.
- Identify and encourage opportunities for work-based learning.
- Ensure funding under this part is used in a coordinated manner with other local resources.

Perkins-receiving campuses continue to host high-impact, student centered events and activities such as the 3rd annual Welding Competition and Transportation & Industry Expo at City College, the Career Bonanza and Cultivating Careers events at Dawson Community College, the Summer Experience program at Flathead Valley Community College, Career Days and Transfer Days at Fort Peck Community College, Gallatin College’s Photonic-CON, Great Falls College’s World of Work (WOW), Industry Nights at Helena College, Trades & Technology Day at Highlands College, Missoula College’s Industrial Expo, Blackfeet Community College’s College and Career Fair, MSU Northern’s TekNoXpo, the GRIT (trades education) and Women in Cybersecurity events at Missoula College, College and Career Exploration Day at Salish Kootenai College, and the Future NOW Expo at UM Western.

Montana’s Perkins-receiving campuses drive career exploration and work-based learning experiences for students in the State. This includes construction, machinery, and automotive internships at City College, plumbing, building trades, and electrical apprenticeships at Flathead Valley Community College, industry-recognized certifications built into Great Falls College’s

Cybersecurity Program, Helena College's participation in the American Jobs for America's, Youth Summer Jobs Program, automotive job shadowing for Highlands College's Sprint Automotive Technology program, clinical medical assisting internships through Missoula College, MSU Northern's 101 internships and cooperative education experiences, the Dental Assisting Bootcamp at Salish Kootenai College, apprenticeships at the Blackfeet Housing Authority for Blackfeet Community College's students, reserve office training for Criminal Justice students at Dawson Community College, and internships for Fire and Emergency Services students at Helena College.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, Perkins funding was used to purchase or supplement the cost of major equipment vital for training students on technology current with industry, such as a simulator for Miles Community College's nursing program, CTE tablets for instructors at MSU Northern, three virtual reality simulation stations to support student success in Anatomy and Physiology classes at Salish Kootenai College, Nurse Tim and Keith RN training simulations for students at City College, a CNC plasma table and new welders for Dawson Community Colleges, a full-sized patient manikin for the Flathead Valley Nursing Program, Allied Health remote learning equipment for Gallatin College, and welding equipment for Missoula College.

Colleges also used the grant to provide professional development for faculty, staff and teachers including Electrical Vehicle training, the Recipe for Success professional development opportunity at Flathead Valley Community College, the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement Rural Guided Pathways for Missoula College faculty and staff, an automotive faculty attending the Teaching and Learning Excellence Festival, the completion of the National Career Pathways Network Certificate of Completion in the Leadership Development Academy for the Blackfeet Community College's workforce director, City College faculty attending the Empowering Nurse Educators training, Flathead Valley Community College's Medical Lab Tech program director attended the Clinical Laboratory Educator's Conference, faculty attendance to the National Security Agency as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense from Gallatin College, and attendance to the Montana Financial Education Coalition for Great Falls College faculty.

Perkins funding was also used to create and/or update existing program curricula across the state including the Surveying AAS program at Flathead Community College, the Welding and IT Cybersecurity programs at Gallatin College, SIM lab coordination for nursing, surgical tech, and paramedics programs at Great Falls College, cosmetology and aviation programs at Helena College, education, nursing, and legal studies programs at Missoula College, and pre-education at MSU Northern.

Some of the most exciting achievements for the 2023-2024 grant cycle include:

- A female City College dual enrollment student won the State Skills USA competition in Auto Body and travelled to the national competition, where she placed 20th.

- Missoula College faculty and staff completed the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement Rural Guided Pathways Institute, defining degree maps and organizing the student journey through structured choice.
- Salish Kootenai College implemented the Native Youth Community Project, focusing on expanding work-based learning specifically for Native American high school students.
- City College hosted Women in Automotive and Women in Fire Science events.

IV. Updates for Secondary CTE Programs

The Office of Public Instruction continues its strong commitment to supporting CTE student leadership development in Montana. The majority of the CTE Specialists also serve as state advisors in their respective career fields, providing direct state leadership to their program-related career and technical student organization (CTSO). OPI also continued to support CTSO's in resources and funding. Staff provides administrative and leadership resources to assist the organizations in competitive event conferences. State leadership teams from the Montana FFA Association, Business Professionals of America (BPA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), HOSA, DECA, SkillsUSA, and Technology Student Association (TSA) participated in team-building activities, leadership style activities, situational leadership activities, and career development events.

Middle School Career Exploration

For the 2023-2024 grant cycle, \$50,000 of Perkins Rural Reserve grant funds were used to support career exploration in the middle grades. Schools demonstrated their eligibility by connecting with secondary programs Montana Career Pathways. Twenty applicants were funded with Rural Reserve and resulted in activities and purchases related to Family Consumer Sciences, Hydroponics, Welding, STEM, Manufacturing, Agriculture Mechanics, and CTE Career Fairs.

V. Financial Update

Allocations for Secondary CTE Programs. OPI has distributed funds on an annual basis for secondary CTE programs to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) according to the following formula, as determined in the Perkins law:

- The total amount allocated for distribution through the local application formula for secondary education CTE is \$3,315,410.00 for the July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 grant cycle.

- Of this amount, seventy percent of the available funds were allocated to LEAs based on the census data for school system enrollment for the number of children in poverty aged 5-17 for the previous school year.
- Thirty percent of the available funds were allocated to LEAs based on the AIM enrollment data for the number of children aged 5-17 for the previous school year.

Allocations for Postsecondary CTE Programs. The total amount allocated for distribution through the local application formula for postsecondary education CTE for the most recent completed grant cycle (FY 2024) was \$1,785,221.00. Funding for postsecondary programs is determined in accordance with Perkins law, by dividing the number of Pell grant and Bureau of Indian Affairs program recipients enrolled in the two-year postsecondary institution by the total number of Pell Grant and Bureau of Indian Affairs program recipients in the state. Fourteen of Montana’s two-year and community colleges received Perkins funding during 2023-2024, including three tribal colleges and all three community colleges.

VI. Conclusion

The state of Montana continues to engage in activities made possible by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). Through the resources made available from the Act and state and local funding for career and technical education, Montana continues to increase the quality of career and technical education programs and provide more options for students as they prepare for college and their careers.