



Montana State Plan for Career and Technical Education

FY 2024-2027

Executive Summary

Introduction: The Perkins V State Plan is a means by which Montana formalizes strategic partnerships and directs funding to coordinate a labor-market driven Career and Technical Education System. By creating strong pathways from K-12 through postsecondary education and workforce development, the strategies and performance indicators outlined in this plan will help ensure that Montana students have robust learning opportunities to gain the skills and education necessary to secure careers in high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand jobs.

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education (Board of Regents) is the designated state board (MCA 20-7-239) eligible to administer and supervise Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education programming in the state of Montana. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) coordinate and collaborate to develop and submit the state's plan for career and technical education as required by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act and to provide a seamless system of services to those seeking to improve their career and technical skills.

Process: Members of the State Plan Advisory Committee were appointed in conformity with Montana Law (MCA 20-7-330). Members of the State Plan Advisory Committee are Paddy Fleming, Director, Montana Manufacturing Extension Center; Lily Apedaile, Director, Office of Health Research and Partnership, University of Montana; Dan Durglo, Director of Operations, S&K Technologies; James Easton, Montana Chamber Foundation Workforce Specialist; Bill Ryan, Education Coordinator, Dick Anderson Construction; and Mary Heller, Montana Ready Coordinator, Montana Office of Public Instruction.

The draft Montana State Plan's development included broad consultation with CTE educators, eligible recipients including tribal colleges, parents, students, adult CTE providers, guidance counselors, interested community representatives, and representatives of special populations, business and industry, and labor organizations in the state. A stakeholder survey was distributed, and over 1,300 responses were received. Some of the most valuable information gained from the CTE survey included:

- 96% of respondents agree that quality CTE options for students are important to strengthen Montana's economy.
- 90% of respondents believe that work-based learning opportunities are very or extremely important for a student's education.
- 67% of students indicate they want to obtain a 4-year degree or higher.
- 57% of students say that they are not sure if their school offers credits for work-based learning.
- Most students, teachers, and school administrators indicate that the largest barrier existing for students wanting to take advantage of work-based learning opportunities is lack of time/flexibility in student schedules.

Montana's Updated 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.

Montana's Updated CTE Goals: 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.

Highlights and Significant Updates:

- 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, Attained Postsecondary Credits, 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.