

Career and Technical Education Outcomes



Career and Technical Education (CTE) sits at the center of a modern talent development system, serving as the cornerstone between earning and learning and education and the economy. As states respond to evolving labor market demands, there is a clear opportunity to more intentionally align education and workforce systems by including Perkins V within a WIOA-Combined State Plan. This approach allows states to coordinate strategy, funding, and performance accountability across agencies, creating a more seamless pipeline from secondary education through postsecondary training and into employment. The urgency of this alignment is underscored by federal labor data indicating that the U.S. economy is projected to generate more than 19 million job openings annually, driven by both growth and replacement needs.¹

At the same time, aligning Perkins V with WIOA strengthens states' ability to serve special populations and expand labor force participation, which is an essential economic priority. Coordinated programming can ensure that more individuals access and complete pathways leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, which are increasingly tied to employment and earnings. Federal data consistently show that educational attainment is strongly correlated with labor market outcomes, with higher levels of education associated with lower unemployment and higher median earnings.² Additionally, millions of projected job openings are concentrated in occupations requiring education beyond high school, including certificates, industry-recognized credentials, and associate degrees which reinforces the need for accessible, high-quality CTE pathways that are aligned to workforce demand.³ By positioning CTE within a unified talent development strategy, states can better connect learners to recognized postsecondary credential attainment, sustained employment, and meaningful participation in the labor market.

Work-Based Learning Participation

Perkins V includes participation in **work-based learning (WBL)** as a key outcome. Many states use WBL as a quality indicator, and significant numbers of CTE concentrators participate in internships, apprenticeships, and workplace experiences.⁴

WBL helps students **apply academics and technical skills in authentic settings**, supporting career readiness.⁵

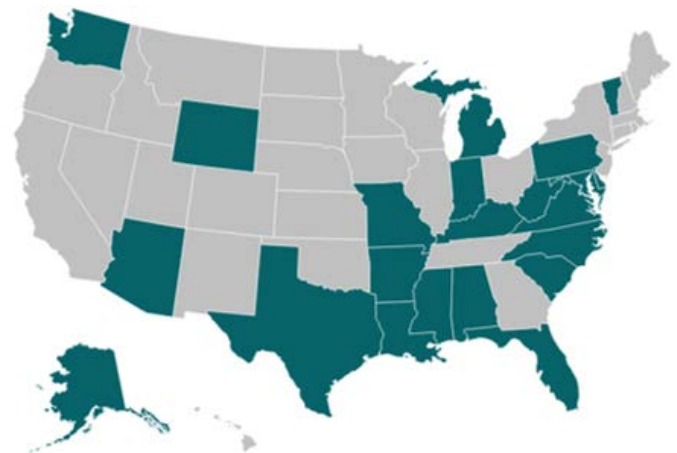


In Nebraska, **WBL participation among CTE concentrators grew from ~5.3% to ~16.7%** across FY 2019–FY 2025 Perkins reporting.

Credential and Certification Attainment

In program year 2023-24 among 777,423 secondary CTE concentrators **in the 22 States that report attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, 433,876 or roughly 56%, earned a recognized postsecondary credential.**⁶

Hundreds of thousands of secondary CTE students have earned **industry certifications, licenses, or certificates** in recent reporting cycles.⁷



Increased Academic Rigor and Achievement

Research shows CTE participation is associated with **increased enrollment in higher-level math courses** and stronger academic engagement compared with similar peers not in CTE.⁸

Systematic reviews report **statistically significant positive impacts** of CTE on academic achievement measures like high school course performance.⁹

Postsecondary and Workforce Outcomes

Research indicates CTE participants **are more likely to be employed after high school** compared with non-CTE peers.⁹

Longitudinal state research shows that **higher CTE participation correlates with increased high school graduation and stronger labor market outcomes**, with focused pathway students more likely to earn credentials and a living wage years after graduation.¹⁰

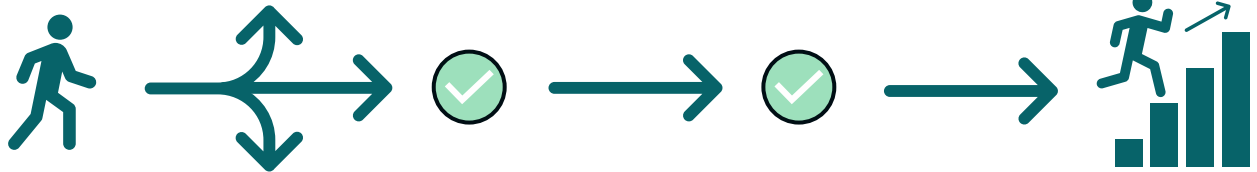
Other studies suggest CTE completers go on to **postsecondary vocational programs and complete credentials** at higher rates than similar non-CTE students.¹¹



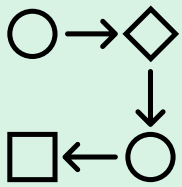
In Washington state, compared to students who only took up to one credit in CTE, observationally similar **students who earned more than one credit overall** were **5.7 to 12.0 percentage points more likely to graduate from high school**.¹⁰

Alignment with High-Skill, High-Wage or In-Demand Career Pathways

Perkins V funds support programs aligned **with high-skill, high-wage or in-demand careers**, strengthening the relevance of education to labor market needs and helping students plan viable career pathways.¹²



Accountability and Continuous Improvement



Perkins V's performance indicators require states to report on outcomes such as **graduation, credential attainment, postsecondary credit, and WBL participation**, creating ongoing quality improvement cycles and transparency.¹³

State plans use Perkins outcomes data to set goals for **gap reduction, concentrator advancement, credential attainment, and pre-apprenticeship growth**.¹⁴

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