



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION

DIVISION OF ADULT AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

PROGRAM MEMORANDUM 26-3

DATE: March 26, 2026

TO: Governors, State Directors of Career and Technical Education, State Workforce Agency Administrators, and State and Local Workforce Board Leaders

FROM: Nick Moore /s/
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SUBJECT: Aligning Activities Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V) to Support a Unified Talent Development System

Purpose

This program memorandum outlines practical strategies for states to align activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, reauthorized as the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), to support a unified talent development system that seamlessly connects secondary education, postsecondary education, workforce training, and employment.

Through bold actions taken by the Trump Administration, the Department of Education's (ED's) Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) and the Department of Labor's (DOL's) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) are co-administering Perkins V and adult education programs in concert with DOL-managed workforce programs. Together, these efforts support an integrated public workforce development system that provides maximum flexibility for states and local areas to enhance career pathways leading to careers in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations.

States have had the opportunity to submit WIOA Combined State Plans that include Perkins since WIOA became law in 2016; however, only nine states currently have a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V. While submitting a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V is not a requirement, states should consider submitting a Combined State Plan to increase coordination and minimize administrative burden. To enhance the value proposition for submitting WIOA Combined State Plans that include Perkins V, OCTAE, in partnership with ETA, has taken steps to align the submission deadlines for WIOA and Perkins V State Plans and modifications. ED and ETA have also

further integrated and aligned the review process of the common elements of WIOA Combined State Plans to ensure states receive consistent feedback.

WIOA and Perkins V share the common purpose of preparing learners for high-demand, high-wage careers that meet employer needs. The strategies in this memorandum have the ability to reduce fragmentation between K-12 education, career and technical education (CTE), adult education, and the public workforce development system. These strategies also allow states to capitalize upon recent federal innovations, including [Perkins V flexibilities](#), the [interagency partnership](#) between ED and DOL, development of [America's Talent Strategy](#), and ETA's [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 05-25](#) on maximizing innovation. States now have the chance to move beyond simple coordination and toward true systems integration.

Federal Coordination and Combined Planning

Under an interagency agreement established on May 21, 2025, ED and DOL now co-administer Perkins V and WIOA Title II adult education and family literacy programs. While ED retains statutory oversight and control over these programs, this partnership supports a combined state planning process, coordinated state plan submission timelines and review protocols, shared technical assistance, and joint monitoring activities. These changes reduce silos and promote model collaboration between agencies to support a unified talent development system that should be replicated at the state level. In combination with the required WIOA State Plan modification process in Program Year 2026, this partnership creates a clear opportunity for states to pursue meaningful and intentional collaboration among Perkins V and the WIOA core programs, including by incorporating Perkins V into their WIOA State Plan or by aligning state and local planning elements to prepare for submission of a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V in the Program Year 2028-2031 cycle.

The Need for a Unified Talent Development System

While labor shortages currently impact virtually every sector of the United States economy, manufacturing and construction face a growing crisis due to a lack of skilled trades workers. Analysts project a shortfall of millions of skilled trades workers over the next decade, with retirements consistently outpacing new entrants into the workforce. This imbalance threatens employers and industries reliant on skilled labor, including critical infrastructure and defense sectors, and could have significant economic and national security consequences if left unaddressed.¹

¹ ZipDo Education. (2025) *Skilled trades statistics: Labor market demand and shortages*. Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://zipdo.co/skilled-trades-statistics>; McKinsey & Company. (2024). *Tradespeople wanted: The need for critical trade skills in the U.S.* Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/tradespeople-wanted-the-need-for-critical-trade-skills-in-the-us>.

In December 2025, the U.S. labor force participation rate was 62.4 percent, down from its early 2000 peak of 67.3 percent.² The labor force participation problem is particularly acute among young men. In January 1960, 97.1 percent of prime age (25-54) men and 42.1 percent of prime age women were participating in the labor force. As of September 2025, only 89.5 percent³ of prime age men were participating in the labor force while the rate among prime age women was 78 percent.⁴ The Trump Administration is focused on fixing, rather than admiring, this problem. The labor force participation rate rose to 63.3 percent under President Trump's leadership to reverse precipitous declines since 2000, yet the failed policies of the Biden Administration have resulted in a frustrating drop in participation.

Due to a fragmented public workforce development system fostered by Democratic Administrations stretching back to the 1930s, a reliance on means-tested public benefits has created a shortage of individuals with recognized postsecondary credentials, shortage of skilled trades workers, and persistent labor market disconnection of youth and young adults who are facing barriers to employment.

According to the Lumina Foundation, only 44.1 percent of working-age Americans have attained a postsecondary credential, inclusive of occupational licenses, certificates, apprenticeships, and degrees and are earning at or above the post-high school wage threshold as of 2023.⁵ This is particularly concerning given that, according to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, an estimated 72 percent of jobs may require postsecondary education or training by 2031, compared to 66 percent of jobs today.⁶

Persistent labor market disconnection among youth and young adults continues to shrink the available workforce and exacerbate labor shortages in the United States. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, roughly 16 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds are neither enrolled in school nor employed, representing nearly five million potential workers excluded from the labor force nationally.⁷

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Civilian labor force participation rate*. Retrieved February 4, 2026, from <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm>

³ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (n.d.). *Infra-Annual Labor Statistics: Labor Force Participation Rate Male: From 25 to 54 Years for United States* [Data series LRAC25MAUSM156S]. FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LRAC25MAUSM156S>

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Lumina Foundation. (2025). *Educational attainment levels in the U.S.* Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/attainment>

⁶ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (2023). *After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031* (Executive Summary). Retrieved February 4, 2026, from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections2031-ES.pdf>

⁷ Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. (2024). *Analysis of disconnected youth among 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States* (as summarized in CNBC reporting). Retrieved February 3, 2026, from <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/community-development/disconnectedyoungadults/full-report.pdf?sc>

Together, these trends point to a fragmented education and workforce system that is failing to connect talent to opportunity, thus underscoring the need for stronger alignment of programs and investments under WIOA and Perkins V. This alignment will help to build and strengthen pathways into high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers. President Trump has taken action to integrate the federal agencies supporting talent development. Now is the time for states to do the same, which will provide the recipe for strengthening our education and public workforce systems.

Combined State and Local Planning to Align Activities Under WIOA and Perkins V

WIOA and Perkins V were aligned by design. Indeed, both laws emphasize planning related to employer input, economic and labor market analysis, stakeholder engagement, attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, program alignment, and employer input in program design. This alignment provides a strong foundation for combined planning at the state level, as illustrated in the table below, and has been incentivized by the recent alignment of submission deadlines for WIOA and Perkins V by ED and DOL.

Table 1: WIOA and Perkins V Activities Supported by Combined Planning

Planning Element	WIOA Requirement	Perkins V Requirement	Benefit of Combined Planning
Employer Input	Employers drive sector strategies (Sector strategies described in Section 134)	Employers validate programs and pathways (Section 134)	Employers experience a single system, not silos, thus incentivizing engagement
Economic and Labor Market Analysis	State Plan must analyze economic and labor market conditions and in-demand sectors (Section 102)	State Plan must align CTE programs with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations (Section 122)	One shared economic narrative reduces conflicting priorities
Stakeholder Engagement	Broad stakeholder engagement and public comment opportunity (Section 102)	Consultation with employers, educators, workforce, and community partners and public comment opportunity (Section 122)	Stakeholder engagement and public comment are conducted once; input informs multiple systems
Needs Assessments	Regional planning in designated regions (Section 106); Local planning (Section 108)	Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments to assess access, quality, and workforce alignment (Section 134)	Regional priorities are aligned across education and workforce
Recognized Postsecondary Credentials	Local plans describe activities that lead to industry-recognized credentials (Section 108); Performance measured through credential attainment, employment, and earnings (Section 116)	Emphasis on attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials (Section 113)	Shared definition improves clarity and potential for alignment
Work-Based Learning and Registered Apprenticeship	Local workforce development boards, at least one member of which is from a registered	Local recipients must describe how they will provide work-based learning opportunities,	Alignment and WIOA waivers strengthen work-based learning systems and career pathways

	apprenticeship program, must describe local strategies for work-based learning (Section 108)	which may include registered apprenticeships (Section 135)	
Local and Regional Program Alignment	Local plans require alignment with needs of local businesses and with Perkins programs of study (Section 108)	Programs of study must align with labor market needs (Section 122)	Education supply and workforce demand are planned together

Employer Input

Input from employers is a cornerstone of both WIOA and Perkins V planning, ensuring that workforce and education programs are responsive to real-time labor market needs. Under WIOA, employer-led local and regional workforce development boards must involve employers in sector strategies, career pathway development, and program design to ensure training and services meet the needs of in-demand industries. Similarly, Perkins V requires that local eligible recipients engage employers in the development and evaluation of programs of study, including input on curriculum, work-based learning opportunities, and alignment with regional workforce needs.

To maximize efficiency and impact, states should consider leveraging sector partnerships at the employer advisory boards for Perkins V programs of study. These partnerships, potentially organized around the [Modernized National Career Clusters Framework](#), can serve as a practical structure for identifying in-demand occupations, aligning programs with regional and statewide labor market needs, and informing lists of postsecondary credentials of value. By coordinating employer engagement under WIOA and Perkins V, states can create a cohesive system in which programs are informed by labor market realities, students and job seekers gain meaningful experience, and employers have a direct role in shaping a unified talent development system.

Economic and Labor Market Analysis

By combining WIOA and Perkins V planning around required economic and labor market analysis, states can create a unified view of workforce and education needs. WIOA requires state plans to analyze economic and labor market conditions and identify in-demand sectors and occupations, as well as the competencies needed in these sectors and occupations. Perkins V requires that CTE programs are aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. Coordinating these requirements produces a single economic narrative that reduces conflicting priorities and enables more strategic investments. States can strengthen this approach by leveraging the data systems established under WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser), which can track and analyze job postings, unemployment claims, and workforce flows in real time. These data systems provide actionable insights to identify gaps between programming and employer demand, ensuring that both workforce development and CTE programs are responsive to current and emerging labor market trends.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an integral part of planning for both WIOA and Perkins V. Particular care must be taken moving forward to align local and statewide stakeholder engagement activities, including employer input, to provide for aligned lists of regional and statewide lists of in-demand occupations and recognized postsecondary credentials aligned to those occupations. WIOA requires consultation with the following stakeholders when developing a four-year unified state plan and during the required two-year state plan modification process: representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, other primary stakeholders, and the general public. Combined state plans may also include consultation with stakeholders representing Perkins V, Senior Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Under Perkins V, states must consult with a wide array of stakeholders when developing a four-year state plan or when making significant and relevant revisions to an existing state plan. Specifically, states must consult representatives of secondary and postsecondary CTE programs, parents, students, community organizations, representatives of state workforce development boards established under section 101 of WIOA, business and industry representatives, representatives of agencies serving special populations, representatives of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, and individuals with disabilities.

Both WIOA and Perkins V require states to provide opportunities for public comment during state plan development. Conducting public comment as part of a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V improves efficiency, reduces duplicative efforts, and supports the development of a coordinated talent development system supported by input for diverse stakeholder groups that straddle education and workforce systems.

Given the broad overlap between required stakeholders among WIOA and Perkins V, states should consider a process for integrated stakeholder engagement and public comment through in-person and virtual means when developing a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V.

Needs Assessments

Under WIOA section 108, each local workforce development board (Local WDB) must, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected officials, develop and submit a comprehensive four-year plan to the Governor. The local workforce investment plan must include:

- A regional analysis of economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations;
- An analysis of the employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations;
- An analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

- An analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment;
- An analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers;
- A description of the Local WDB's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures;
- A description of the workforce development system in the local area that identifies the programs that are included in the system; and
- A description of how the Local WDB will support the strategy identified in the State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to support service alignment.

These activities are intended to ensure that workforce development efforts are aligned across local areas within economic regions and that resources are deployed collaboratively to address shared labor market challenges.

Perkins V requires that local recipients complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) not less than every two years to ensure that CTE programs are strategically aligned with student needs and regional workforce demands. CLNAs must include:

- Evaluation of student performance by subgroup on the Perkins V core indicators of performance.
- Alignment of CTE programs offered to labor market needs.
- Analysis of CTE programs offered to ensure they are of significant size, scope, and quality.
- Evaluation of progress toward implementing CTE programs and programs of study.
- Description of recruitment, retention, and training for CTE educators and support professionals.
- Description of progress toward implementing equal access to CTE for all students.

WIOA local planning, in addition to regional planning required under Section 106(c) and Perkins V CLNA requirements, can be aligned by using shared labor market and program data to identify workforce gaps and target high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. CLNAs may be conducted at the regional level, rather than strictly locally, if the requirements in section 134(b) of Perkins V are met by all local recipients contributing to the regional CLNA. Conducting CLNAs regionally enables Perkins V program assessments to feed directly into WIOA local and regional plans, creating a coordinated,

data-driven approach where education and workforce partners jointly analyze labor market needs, align program offerings, and develop unified strategies across the region.

Recognized Postsecondary Credentials

Attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials is a core pillar of both WIOA and Perkins V. Currently, 22 states selected postsecondary credential attainment as their required secondary program quality indicator under Perkins V, making the definition of recognized postsecondary credential a common denominator between WIOA and Perkins V programs. However, given the growing demand for individuals with such credentials, all states should ensure that WIOA and Perkins V programs consistently lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that hold value in the labor market.

To this end, states can utilize planning for the submission of WIOA Combined State Plans that include Perkins V to jointly define and maintain a list of recognized postsecondary credentials that will be accepted for accountability under both programs. State-level criteria to consider when determining the labor market value of non-degree credentials includes whether a credential is:

- Required by law, mandated by industry, or preferred by industry.
- Required to obtain employment in a particular occupation or industry; part of a stackable sequence; or complementary, but not directly aligned, to an occupation or career pathway.
- Sought by employers, as evidenced by job postings, labor market information, or other employer demand.
- Accredited or recognized by a statewide or national industry-recognized body.
- Aligned to an occupation on a regional or statewide list of in-demand occupations, as validated through direct input from employers in such occupations.
- A recognized postsecondary credential available to be earned by learners at either the secondary or postsecondary level.
- Earned after a minimum number of hours of instruction time, the competency-based equivalency, or through direct assessment.
- Stackable in a sequence of aligned recognized postsecondary credentials
- Valuable as determined by leading to at least a state-determined wage premium over a high school diploma.
- Traceable and trackable by systems of record in a structured, open, linked, interoperable, and machine-readable data format.
- Portable across or within an industry sector.

By coordinating planning and jointly defining postsecondary credentials of value, states can ensure WIOA and Perkins V programs consistently lead students and jobseekers to high-demand credentials that improve employment outcomes and economic mobility.

Work-Based Learning and Registered Apprenticeship

Perkins V provides a strong foundation for expanding high-quality work-based learning (WBL) and Registered Apprenticeships by aligning CTE programs of study with labor market needs. Through programs of study, employer engagement, and recognized postsecondary credentials, Perkins V supports internships, pre-apprenticeships, clinicals, and youth-serving Registered Apprenticeships that connect classroom learning with paid, on-the-job experience. Perkins V funds can be used to strengthen employer and workforce partnerships, align curricula to apprenticeship standards, and support articulation agreements that enable seamless transitions from secondary CTE into postsecondary education and Registered Apprenticeship. When braided with workforce funding and guided by employer input, Perkins V helps states and local recipients build talent pipelines that expand access to high-demand careers, reduce barriers for learners, and meet regional workforce needs.

Under WIOA, Registered Apprenticeships can be added automatically to a state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) if the sponsor requests it. WIOA waivers further support this connection by expanding training and apprenticeship opportunities for in-school youth (ISY). Specifically, the waiver of 20 CFR 681.550 allows local areas to provide Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to ISY. This increases access to approved training programs and enables students to participate in occupational training before graduation, including Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. States and local areas are encouraged to coordinate these efforts with Perkins V funded CTE programs to create integrated career pathways and align investments. This flexibility has helped states broaden postsecondary training options, respond to employer needs, and boost youth participation in Registered Apprenticeship programs.

Additional waivers allowing states to reduce the WIOA out-of-school youth (OSY) expenditure requirement from 75 percent to 50 percent, or to apply the OSY requirement statewide rather than locally, provide further flexibility to invest in ISY services. These waivers complement the ISY ITA waiver by allowing local areas to expand work experience, training, and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for in-school youth, especially in communities with smaller OSY populations. States can also consider a waiver of the requirement for each local area to make all 14 youth program elements available, allowing local areas to further focus WIOA Youth funding on pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships.

Together, these flexibilities strengthen coordination between WIOA Youth and Perkins V by enabling braided funding approaches. For example, using WIOA Youth funds for work experience and on-the-job learning while Perkins supports related instruction through CTE programs of study. This integrated strategy helps keep students engaged in school, supports transitions beyond high school, and accelerates entry into high-quality career pathways.

Local and Regional Program Alignment

WIOA requires that local workforce boards develop sector strategies that target in-demand industries, coordinate training and employment services, and align resources across multiple programs to meet employer needs. This includes analyzing economic and labor market data, identifying skills gaps, and implementing career pathway programs that connect jobseekers to in-demand occupations. Perkins V similarly requires that local eligible recipients structure programs of study in a way that aligns with labor market needs, providing coherent sequences of secondary and postsecondary coursework that prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand careers. When these requirements are aligned through joint planning, education and workforce systems can plan talent supply to meet employer demand together, ensuring that programs provide individuals with the skills employers need. This coordination reduces duplication, strengthens career pathways, increases attainment of postsecondary credentials of value, and supports regional economic growth.

Additional Considerations for Combined Planning

While federal statute and guidance articulate the value of combined planning under WIOA and Perkins V, states are responsible for translating those expectations into coordinated policy and practice. Doing so requires intentional decisions about shared data and accountability systems, braided funding strategies, co-enrollment and intake processes, and approaches to serving individuals with barriers to employment and special populations while advancing education outcomes and labor force participation goals. This section highlights key considerations for states as they operationalize combined planning through a WIOA-Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V and moves from alignment in concept to integration in implementation.

Shared Data and Accountability Systems

Joint planning under WIOA and Perkins V creates an opportunity for states to strengthen shared data and accountability systems that support aligned performance management across education and workforce programs. Through a combined approach, states can build or expand longitudinal data systems that integrate secondary and postsecondary CTE data, WIOA program participation, and employment and wage data, enabling more consistent and actionable tracking of participant outcomes over time.

Joint planning also supports the development of interoperable talent marketplaces⁸ composed of Learning and Employment Records, skills-based job description generators,

⁸ Talent marketplace means a digital, interconnected system of technologies maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8), that (a) is publicly available; (b) includes an integrated: (i) Learning and Employment Record; (ii) Credential Registry; and (iii) Skill-Based Job Description generator; (c) utilizes artificial intelligence to enable students and jobseekers, employers, and education and training providers to transform, transcribe, and transact earned learning assertions, job descriptions, and degree and non-degree credentials into discrete competency statements; and (d) may be curated into interoperable individual records of achievement and learning and employment recommendations.

and credential registries that are designed to connect employees, education and training providers, and students and jobseekers. States are encouraged to participate in OCTAE's [Connecting Talent to Opportunity \(CTO\) Talent Marketplace](#) Challenge by April 30, 2026, in addition to DOL training grants, such as the recently announced [Strengthening Community Colleges \(SCC\) Training Grants](#), that also emphasize statewide data integration and the development of talent marketplaces. The CTO Talent Marketplace Challenge is designed to support full-scale talent marketplace development and expansion.

In addition, combined planning allows for alignment of WIOA's shared definitions with Perkins V, including recognized postsecondary credentials. Perkins V includes the first federal definition of work-based learning, which can be leveraged to create a spectrum of work-based learning activities that culminate in youth-serving Registered Apprenticeship. Alignment of these definitions under both programs can help states to reduce duplicative reporting, improve transparency, better use outcome data to drive continuous improvement, and prepare for the role governors and state workforce boards must exercise in implementing Workforce Pell grants.

Braided Funding

Joint WIOA and Perkins V planning provides the foundation for coordinated policy development, which can help states braid funding in ways that support integrated service delivery. A combined planning approach positions states to issue guidance that promotes participants accessing a broader range of education, training, and support services, including through co-enrollment across CTE programs and WIOA Title I Youth and Adult programs. While states can already braid funds under current law, states may also use WIOA waivers if needed, including those described in TEGE 05-25, to remove statutory and administrative barriers, particularly for in-school youth. Additionally, joint planning can facilitate intentional braiding of Perkins and WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy state leadership set-asides and the Governor's WIOA Title I set-aside funds to sustain a state level office or cross agency task force, ideally aligned with the Office of the Governor, focused on coordinating WIOA and Perkins V policy and implementation.

Coordinated Intake and Co-Enrollment

Aligning intake and enrollment processes through joint WIOA and Perkins V planning can streamline access to services, improve administrative efficiency, and enhance the participant experience. Through a combined planning approach, states can reimagine intake and screen secondary CTE students for WIOA Youth eligibility, reducing duplicative intake and accelerating connections to workforce services and valuable work-based learning opportunities. States can also establish referral pathways for postsecondary CTE students, and WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, to Workforce Pell, as well as referrals and co-enrollment as needed among CTE, WIOA Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs. In doing so, participants will gain access to coordinated tuition assistance, tools, and supportive services. By simplifying entry points and promoting co-enrollment, these strategies reduce program silos, lower administrative burden for

providers, and make it easier for learners and jobseekers to navigate education and workforce systems while advancing shared attainment of desired outcomes.

Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment and Special Populations

Submitting a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V allows states to coordinate strategies for serving WIOA-defined individuals with barriers to employment and Perkins-defined special populations (such as students with disabilities), ensuring more efficient program administration. Most population subcategories overlap across the two statutes, with only a few unique to Perkins V, including individuals preparing for non-traditional fields and youth with parents on active duty in the military; out-of-workforce individuals under Perkins V also includes a WIOA-defined group, displaced homemakers. States can use the WIOA Combined Plan to incorporate all definitions into a single statewide list. This approach helps states improve credential attainment and labor force participation.

While not required, states can strengthen and meaningfully integrate their education and workforce development systems into a unified talent development system by submitting a WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Perkins V. Doing so allows states to align programs, coordinate funding, integrate data, and set clear performance targets while reducing duplication, improving levels of credential attainment, and strengthening Governors' efforts to increase labor force participation. A combined approach not only benefits individual states by making service more efficient and desired outcomes more attainable but also supports our nation's broader economic competitiveness and talent development goals.

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