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SREB

# Designing a Ready Workforce

Opportunities for state leaders to align ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA funds

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

States face the daunting task of better preparing individuals and businesses to thrive in a fast-changing economy. To support states in 2020 as they finalize their new plans for federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century (Perkins V) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds and as they consider updates to their Every Student Succeeds Act plans, SREB reviewed a sample of states' existing plans. Based on this review and on SREB's deep knowledge of state efforts, **SREB identified six ways in which states have missed opportunities in the past to align work funded by ESSA, Perkins and WIOA.**

**For each missed opportunity, SREB poses a key question and two to three follow-up questions, and provides examples of good alignment already in place. Policymakers can use these questions and examples to finalize their new Perkins and WIOA plans and refine their ESSA plan so that, when updated, they provide a coherent and systemic approach to preparing a workforce ready to meet the demands of a changing economy.**

Aligned programs will enable more individuals to earn a high school diploma plus additional credentials of value, including associate, bachelor's and advanced academic degrees, apprenticeship certifications and recognized industry certifications. With these credentials, more individuals can succeed in well-paying careers in states' critical industries. With a better prepared workforce, more businesses will be able to compete in the increasingly technology-dependent and interconnected global economy.

# MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: QUESTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

<p><b>1</b> </p> <p>Do our state's ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA plans reflect a <b>SHARED VISION</b> for improvement?</p>	<p><b>2</b> </p> <p>Do the plans reflect a coordinated system to ensure the quality of <b>IN-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS</b>?</p>	<p><b>3</b> </p> <p>Do all three of our plans articulate how the state will improve <b>WORK-BASED LEARNING</b> for our most critical industries?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all three plans align to a “north star” vision for improving our state’s workforce?</li> <li>Do the plans explain how state leaders will assist educators, businesses and communities in carrying out the work and collaborating through strategic partnerships to realize the vision?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all three plans focus career pathways on the same set of in-demand industries and occupations?</li> <li>Do all three plans establish the expectation that K-12, career and technical education and workforce development providers will use a shared set of criteria and processes to develop high-quality career pathways for in-demand occupations?</li> <li>Do we need to update our ESSA plan to take full advantage of opportunities to increase K-12 students’ participation in in-demand career pathways?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all three plans describe how the state will target funds for work-based learning to in-demand fields and career pathways?</li> <li>Do the plans describe shared indicators for high-quality work-based learning?</li> <li>Do all three plans articulate how educators will engage in industry or sector partnerships to help develop, scale and sustain work-based learning?</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b> </p> <p>In all three plans, can educators, support service providers and communities see a clear path for working together toward <b>EQUITY</b>?</p>	<p><b>5</b> </p> <p>Do the <b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b> systems required by all three statutes produce a coherent set of performance expectations?</p>	<p><b>6</b> </p> <p>Do our plans clearly describe how the state will support coordinated <b>USE OF DATA</b> for improvement?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we bring educators together across the sectors for professional learning, planning and resource sharing to more effectively serve each student throughout their educational experience?</li> <li>Can we better coordinate support services for individuals in need, so more can prepare for well-paying careers in the state’s most in-demand fields?</li> <li>Can we collaborate more to engage with all those who have a stake in helping more people succeed and preparing the state’s workforce, to strengthen and streamline planning?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do we use the requirements and flexibility in the laws to point everyone toward our state’s vision?</li> <li>Do all the plans explain how the state will report accountability data to promote communication and collaboration toward the state’s vision?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all three plans clearly describe how state agencies will coordinate data sharing?</li> <li>Do the plans lay out a shared approach to using data to improve?</li> </ul>

## THE CHALLENGE

**America is experiencing a dynamic shift in the workforce needs of businesses and industries.**

As SREB's 2019 report *Unprepared and Unaware: Upskilling the Workforce for a Decade of Uncertainty* makes clear, business practices are becoming increasingly automated and technology-dependent. Local and state economies are becoming more deeply tied to global markets. Due to these changes, employers' workforce needs constantly evolve and individuals need to attain new knowledge, skills and experience — both to get jobs and to advance in their careers. State leaders must support policies and practices that enable workers and businesses to continually adapt.

**The federal ESSA, Perkins and WIOA statutes have recently been reauthorized, making it easier for states to coordinate education and workforce development efforts.**

SREB's 2019 report *Three Federal Statutes, One State Plan: Coordinating ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA to address rapidly evolving education and workforce needs* describes key points of alignment between the statutes and provides state leaders with an overview of opportunities to promote a systemic approach.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE: ADDRESSING MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

**To support states in 2020 as they finalize their new Perkins V and WIOA plans and consider updates to their ESSA plans, SREB reviewed a sample of states' existing plans.**

For some states, SREB analyzed the existing ESSA, Perkins IV and WIOA plans. In a few states, SREB was able to review an early draft of the new Perkins V plan. SREB leaders also drew on their knowledge of state efforts from extensive collaboration with state leaders and educators.

**SREB identified six ways in which states have missed opportunities in the past to align work funded by ESSA, Perkins and WIOA.**

By addressing these six opportunities, states can shape a seamless system to help more individuals get jobs and advance in their careers by earning a high school diploma plus additional credentials of value, including associate, bachelor's and advanced academic degrees, apprenticeship certifications and recognized industry certifications. A focused system can help more people plug into opportunities in growing and well-paying industries and provide businesses with the labor force they need to compete.

### Three Statutes

#### ***Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*** funds K-12 education. ESSA

- › emphasizes rigorous academics, a well-rounded education and preparation for college and careers
- › promotes equitable opportunities for all children

Read the ESSA legislation [here](#).

#### ***Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act of 2018 (Perkins V)*** supports CTE as early as the fifth grade, in high schools and in postsecondary settings such as community colleges, technical colleges and area CTE schools. Perkins V

- › aims to prepare youth and adults for postsecondary education and careers
- › emphasizes technical knowledge, employability skills and rigorous academics
- › promotes equitable opportunities for all students

Read the Perkins V legislation [here](#).

#### ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)*** funds education and job training for youth and adults. WIOA

- › aims to prepare individuals for careers, meet the workforce needs of employers and promote economic prosperity
- › emphasizes alignment of education and workforce training
- › promotes equitable opportunities for all individuals

Read the WIOA legislation [here](#).

### The six missed opportunities are as follows:

1. States have the opportunity to articulate a clearer, **SHARED VISION** for improvement — a “north star” to guide efforts under all three statutes. Through industry or sector partnerships in particular, states have an opportunity to bring together leaders in education, industry, labor and communities to collaboratively plan and build commitment to preparing a workforce to realize the state’s vision. In doing so, these various *stakeholders* become *shareholders* — people willing to invest of their own time and energy to ensure the success of the students and economies of their state.
2. State plans show a need to better coordinate creation of **IN-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS**, so educators, businesses and communities can develop programs and services that meet a shared, high bar for rigor and that focus on industries most critical to regional and state economies.
3. States can more strategically target funds for **WORK-BASED LEARNING** to strengthen in-demand career pathways, ensure consistent quality in the experiences offered to students statewide, and help businesses more efficiently recruit and retain well-prepared workers.
4. States can identify more opportunities to work across the sectors toward **EQUITY**. Leaders of K-12, CTE and workforce development can help educators learn together and share resources to better serve each student, coordinate more comprehensive support services for individuals in need and engage together with shareholders to strengthen planning.
5. State leaders can sharpen educators’ focus on the state’s vision by emphasizing the alignment of the required **ACCOUNTABILITY** indicators in each statute and by maximizing state flexibility to tailor indicators to state priorities.

6. The plans show a need for state leaders to better coordinate the **USE OF DATA** for improvement, by assisting agencies in integrating data systems and coordinating research and reporting, and by collaborating to support local data analysis and planning.

**For each of these opportunities, SREB poses a key question with two or three follow-up questions and provides examples of good alignment already in place. Policymakers can use these questions and examples to finalize their new Perkins V and WIOA plans and refine their ESSA plan so that when updated, they represent a coherent and systemic approach to preparing a workforce ready to meet the demands of a changing economy.**

Likely, some states do more in relation to these opportunities than they describe in these plans. While SREB affirms that federal funding applications do not need to include all there is to know about states’ efforts, SREB encourages policymakers to enrich their ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA plans to include more information about related work. These plans help to set a course for state expectations and actions, and they establish the parameters for major elements of work at the local level. By drawing out more explicitly in these plans how the work supported by these federal funds connects to other work around the state, state leaders can more effectively set a vision for the full spectrum of work in the state’s education and workforce preparation pipeline. By more explicitly connecting the pieces within that full spectrum of work, ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA plans can more effectively push everyone to ask, “How can we work *together* to achieve our shared purpose of helping individuals, businesses and communities thrive?”

# QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLES FOR POLICYMAKERS

1



Do our state's ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA plans reflect a **SHARED VISION** for improvement?

## Do all three of our plans align to a “north star” vision for improving our state’s workforce?

Perkins V and WIOA require states to set the same two types of goals: one for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and one for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers. Yet, in some states, these goals in the two plans do not clearly align. For example, the WIOA plan will situate the goals within the context of priorities for workforce improvement set by the governor or a statewide leadership body like a business roundtable or education coalition, while the Perkins plan goals do not even mention those priorities. While ESSA goals must address academic achievement in English and math, high school graduation rate and English language proficiency, ESSA empowers states to set additional goals to reflect state priorities such as those for workforce development. Yet, most state ESSA plans do not include such goals. This lack of alignment can be seen even when leaders of the agencies governing ESSA, Perkins and WIOA are members of the governor’s council or other body that established the workforce improvement priorities. Some states may have to create their “north star” from scratch, while other states may just need to deepen alliances across groups to fine-tune coordination of goals to the vision.

## Do our plans explain how state leaders will assist educators, businesses and other shareholders in carrying out the work and collaborating through strategic partnerships to realize the vision?

**The work overlaps.** For example, Perkins V can fund activities for students as early as the fifth grade, and states can use ESSA funds to expand CTE.

WIOA can fund training activities in postsecondary institutions and in high schools alongside CTE programs funded by Perkins V. Educators under all three statutes implement career pathways and work-based learning, and they are all required to sharpen their use of data to plan. All three statutes require educators to provide instruction and services to close gaps in achievement between groups of students and to meet the needs of special populations. All three statutes require state and local leaders to involve diverse groups of shareholders in planning, implementing and evaluating the work.

**However, state plans read as if they were written in isolation.** The plans list high-level task forces or boards where state leaders meet. Beyond that, they do not say much about how state agencies will assist educators in collaborating with each other and with businesses and other shareholders to implement the plans. The plans also tend to make general statements that the state agencies will provide educators with professional learning, technical assistance, monitoring and guidance, but they plan to do so separately. **Industry and sector partnerships** provide a powerful strategy for bringing together shareholders connected to a given industry, to foster collaboration toward a common goal. WIOA establishes these partnerships as a required activity to help business leaders, institutions of higher education, K-12 educators, CTE educators, labor, community members and training providers identify the knowledge and skill needs of businesses and coordinate education and training programs to prepare individuals to meet those needs.

**The state can foster better alignment of work at the local level.** All three statutes empower the state to develop local funding applications. The state can require local providers to describe how — along with meeting the requirements in the statute — they will contribute to making progress toward the state’s vision. State leaders should ask if the lack of a shared vision in the state’s plans is reflected in the local plans for ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA. If so, consider ways to align requirements in local funding applications to point everyone in the same direction.

## Setting a vision for improvement and a clear path for getting there together: Maryland

**Broad involvement:** In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly established the [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#), nicknamed the Kirwan Commission. Its mission was to provide recommendations for creating a world-class education system for all of Maryland's public school children. The commission's members represented state and local elected officials, government agencies, business leaders, academic administrators, educators, and parents.

**Bold, cross-sector vision:** The commission worked across party lines and with international education experts to publish in 2019 a set of [recommendations](#) to be phased in over 10 years. Recommendations included the following.

- Early learning: Expand pre-kindergarten to all three- and four-year-olds, to be free for low-income families
- Teacher workforce: Increase teaching licensure standards and salaries, and implement career pathways for teachers
- Instruction: Strengthen the state's instructional system by redesigning curriculum frameworks, courses and assessments, and revamping high schools to increase student access to updated CTE pathways, the International Baccalaureate Diploma program (IB), the Cambridge International Diploma program, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and dual-enrollment courses
- Services: Provide wrap-around services to support students and families
- Funds: Increase funding for education dramatically to help educators implement the recommendations
- Follow-through: Establish an independent body to monitor efforts and results

**Aligned funding:** In 2019, state lawmakers passed legislation to jump-start work on the recommendations, requiring the state to spend \$850 million on recommended programs for two years. In 2020, legislators passed House Bill 1300, [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#), laying out a plan for long-term implementation. The bill sets forth a new funding formula to provide significantly more per pupil, as well as additional funds for compensatory education, special education, English language supports, and schools with high concentrations of children living in poverty. In [House Bill 1](#), legislators revised the state's tax law to dedicate revenues from gambling to supplement education funding. State agency leaders will leverage the ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA funds to support the reform. The new Perkins V plan affirms that CTE systems will address the workforce needs of the state and implement the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission.

*Read more about Maryland's efforts in the EQUITY section on page 13.*

2



## Do all three of our plans reflect a coordinated system for ensuring the quality of **IN-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS**?

### Do all three plans focus career pathways on the same set of in-demand industries and occupations?

In some states, the Perkins and WIOA plans list different sets of in-demand industries and occupations, and the ESSA plan does not even mention a focus on in-demand industries and occupations. Some states' WIOA plans list multiple pages of data on myriad occupations and industries, without clearly stating which are prioritized for development of pathways. In such cases, it is difficult to discern how the state will help educators collaborate with each other and with businesses to prepare more individuals to fill critical workforce gaps. States should ensure that leaders of the work under all three statutes **use the same set of economic and labor** market data to identify the in-demand industries and occupations, and that they clearly highlight them in the plans.

### Do all three plans establish the expectation that K-12, CTE and workforce development providers will use a shared set of criteria and processes to develop high quality career pathways for in-demand occupations?

For some states, one of the plans names a state agency or body to set criteria for pathways development and review and approve pathway designs, while the other plans describe different ways pathways are developed and vetted. In some states, the WIOA or Perkins plan describes an initiative to pilot new pathways but does not mention how educators in the other two sectors participate. This, even though pathways by nature involve programs and services delivered under all three statutes. Some WIOA plans hardly mention CTE or K-12 education, even though local workforce boards must partner with secondary and

postsecondary CTE providers to develop career pathways, and even though career exploration activities funded by Perkins V can begin as early as the fifth grade.

### Do we need to update our ESSA plan to take full advantage of opportunities to increase K-12 students' participation in in-demand career pathways?

Some state ESSA plans do say that K-12 educators will support career pathways. Some list related accountability targets (for example, for students earning postsecondary credit or certifications). Some establish a requirement that students develop career plans. However, most of the state ESSA plans miss all three of the following critical opportunities.

**Well-rounded education.** Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants can support programs in a variety of areas, including fine arts, humanities, foreign languages, physical education, sciences, social sciences – and CTE. Some states' plans for well-rounded education speak only in general terms and do not mention a focus on CTE or strengthening in-demand career pathways. Some plans describe initiatives to recognize schools for exemplary programs in fine arts, social studies and world languages, but miss the chance to recognize exemplary efforts in CTE, dual enrollment or career exploration.

#### In-Demand Pathways

WIOA **defines career pathways** as a combination of education, training, and services that

- › aligns with the needs of industries
- › prepares individuals for success in any of a range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships
- › includes support services
- › enables individuals to attain a secondary school diploma or its equivalent and at least one postsecondary credential
- › helps individuals enter or advance within an occupation

WIOA defines an **“in-demand” industry or occupation** as one with a substantial current or potential impact on the economy through large numbers of jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement.

Read the complete definitions in the legislation [here](#).

**21st Century Learning Communities.** Title IV 21st Century Learning Communities funds afterschool, before-school and summer enrichment programs, particularly for children attending high-poverty and low-performing schools. Funded centers can provide academic and other activities, including fine arts, physical fitness, health education, counseling, dual enrollment — and CTE tied to in-demand industries. Some state plans mention 21st Century Learning Communities as a strategy for increasing access to career pathways in general but set no expectation that the centers focus on in-demand pathways. Some state plans do not even mention career pathways, CTE, or career exploration in this section.

**Early postsecondary opportunities.** Title I funds must be used to increase local offerings of advanced coursework like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment. Local education agencies can support these efforts with Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, and they can use Title II funds to train teachers to offer the courses. State plans include descriptions of initiatives such as redefining the senior year, AP expansion, college scholarships and FAFSA completion, but provide little mention of how these efforts increase student access to disciplinary studies related to the state's in-demand industries.

### Ensuring consistent quality of in-demand career pathways: Delaware

**Coordinated leadership:** Governor John Carney set a target that by 2025, 65% of the state's workforce will earn a two- or four-year degree or professional certificate, matching the percentage of Delaware jobs requiring one. To meet that target, the [Delaware Pathways initiative](#) set out to enroll half the state's public school students (grades 9-12) in career pathways in in-demand fields by 2020. The initiative is coordinated by a group of leaders from the governor's office, state departments of labor, education, economic development, and health and social services, community college system, state workforce development board, Delaware Business Roundtable and civic organizations.

**Rigorous pathway design:** State model pathways exemplify best practices, including the following.

- Identified through analysis of state workforce data
- Developed together by business and industry leaders, educators, and community shareholders
- Coordinated across K-12 districts, CTE providers, adult education providers and postsecondary institutions
- Include training for educators, provided for by the state department of education
- Include work-based learning. Delaware intends that by 2025, 7,500 students — approximately 25 percent of all students in grade 12 and approximately 30 percent of all students at the community college level — will participate in work-based learning placements
- Enable students to attain a secondary school diploma or its equivalent plus additional credentials of value including industry-recognized credentials and associate and bachelor's degrees at a state college or university

**Policy support:**

- Every high school and institution of higher education in the state is expected to participate in career pathways.
- State high school [graduation requirements](#) establish that all students must complete a career pathway — for this purpose, defined as three credits in a specific area of focus such as CTE, math, science or foreign language, beyond those courses otherwise required for graduation.

**Funding:** The state's current WIOA and Perkins IV plans are combined, and the new plans for 2020-23 will be also. Each of the plans articulates a connection to the Pathways initiative.

3



Do all three of our plans articulate how the state will improve **WORK-BASED LEARNING** for our most critical industries?

**Do all three plans describe how the state will strategically target funds for work-based learning?**

**Targeting in-demand fields.** Some states' ESSA, Perkins and WIOA plans describe efforts to expand work-based learning in general, without reference to the state's in-demand fields. Work-based learning is a valuable strategy to prepare individuals for careers in any field. Local educators can apply a variety of resources to provide students opportunities in a wide array of occupations. However, to maximize impact, states can focus federally funded work-based learning efforts in the industries and occupations identified under WIOA as *most critical to the state's economy*. Indeed, WIOA and Perkins V require, and ESSA encourages, educators to target efforts to prepare individuals to enter and advance in the state's in-demand industries.

**Targeting career pathways.** State plans mention a variety of work-based learning that educators and business partners will implement, and the plans describe ways the state will support expansion of work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships. However, some states' plans talk about this with little or no reference to career pathways. Work-based learning is a good way to help any student prepare for a career, whether or not they participate in a formal career pathway. Local educators and business partners can apply a variety of resources to support work-based learning to prepare students for any field. However, WIOA and Perkins V require, and ESSA encourages, states to support career pathways for *in-demand* industries and occupations. By targeting federal resources for work-based learning within career pathways in the state's most critical industries, state leaders maximize the impact of efforts to prepare individuals for success and strengthen the workforce.

**Do our plans describe shared indicators for high-quality work-based learning experiences?**

None of the plans SREB reviewed included information about how the state, educators or business leaders would identify high-quality work-based learning experiences. However, by taking time to develop a definition of quality, state leaders can help educators, businesses and individuals make the most of what work-based learning has to offer. Educators and businesses must be able to distinguish high- from low-quality experiences so they can improve design and implementation. Students must be able to distinguish high- from low-quality experiences so they can select opportunities most likely to help them reach their career goals. The U.S. Department of Education stresses that comprehensive work-based learning programs align classroom and workplace learning; apply academic, technical and employability skills in a work setting; and provide participants with support from classroom or workplace mentors. Beyond this, states need to consider other elements that constitute high-quality work-based learning experiences for businesses and individuals in their state.

**Do all three plans articulate how educators will engage in industry or sector partnerships to help develop, scale and sustain work-based learning?**

State leaders have a big opportunity to strengthen their plans in this area. Few of the plans SREB reviewed describe how the state would support

### Work-Based Learning

**Work-based learning includes** experiences that can begin in the early grades and continue through an adult's career, such as

- > industry tours and field trips
- > job shadowing
- > mentoring
- > internships and apprenticeships
- > on-the-job training

**Perkins V and WIOA require, and ESSA encourages,** states and local providers to describe in their plans how they will enhance student opportunities for work-based learning in in-demand industries and occupations.

Read more about work-based learning [here](#).

industry or sector partnerships in general, and even fewer plans mention how the partnerships would address work-based learning. Some of the plans said that the state will leave this to local providers, and one plan noted that state leaders need to research best practices in order to develop a strategy. However, WIOA requires sector partnerships as a local workforce activity and it requires governors to use statewide reserve funds to assist local partnerships. WIOA stresses the importance of the partnerships in efforts to meet workforce needs, including to develop work-based learning for middle-skills jobs (those requiring more than a high

school diploma but less than a four-year college degree). Industry and sector partnerships, as defined by WIOA, are working groups that bring multiple employers within an industry or related industries together with representatives of higher education, job training providers, labor and community-based organizations, local government officials and others. Participants identify the skill needs of the industries and then collaboratively develop education, training and services — often, career pathways — to help more individuals attain the needed skills and fill the workforce gaps.

### Coordinating improvement of work-based learning: Oklahoma

**State-level collaboration and industry sector partnership:** In 2018, the Oklahoma legislature passed Senate Bill 1171 with bipartisan support. The legislation established a work-based learning program as an official duty of the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development. The council works through the [Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development](#) to facilitate an industry sector partnership including the state departments of education and career and technology education, regents for higher education, board of private vocational schools, secretary of state, and leaders of business and industry.

**Comprehensive program elements:** Based on the legislation, Oklahoma has begun work in the following areas.

- Expand Registered Apprenticeships
- Establish a Registered Internship program
- Launch public awareness campaigns and outreach efforts to increase participation
- Develop pilot programs for youth and adults to improve access for special populations
- Provide services for employers and job seekers to support implementation
- Develop technical assistance and teacher externships to build local capacity
- Expand stakeholder advisory councils
- Establish partnerships among agencies and organizations for grants
- Set expectations for coordinated implementation and long-term planning

**Aligned funding:** State leaders brought together several sources of funds for the effort.

- \$850,000 in state funds annually, from the Office of the Secretary of State
- WIOA funds for individual training accounts, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training and the governor’s set-aside to expand access for underserved populations
- Perkins V funds to support expansion of work-based learning in CTE programs of study and to provide technical assistance to local leaders and training for teachers
- ESSA funds for a “redefined senior year” that includes more student options for apprenticeships, internships and mentorships
- ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to support study and planning

## 4



In all three of our state's plans, can educators, support service providers and communities see a clear path for working together toward **EQUITY**?

### The Equity Imperative

**The American population continues to become more diverse, as local economies increasingly intertwine with global markets and technology transforms the workplace.**

**Learning how to thrive in diverse and dynamic settings prepares individuals and organizations to perform better and adapt to change.** Research shows that all people on diverse teams and in diverse workplaces exhibit increased creativity, problem solving and performance. Research also shows that students' exposure to classmates who are different from them, and the variety of perspectives and challenges that brings, leads to improved critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

**To prepare more individuals and businesses to adapt and succeed, state leaders must take decisive action to increase equity.** States must set an expectation for equity — meaning that each individual and community will have access to opportunities and supports they need to survive and succeed. State leaders must prioritize resources toward this expectation and help local educators, businesses and communities meet it. Not only is this the right thing to do. It will also help prepare a larger portion of the state's workforce to meet the needs of employers, and as such, it will lessen, over the long term, the demand on the state's resources because more individuals will succeed in well-paying careers and be able to support their families.

**ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA provide resources to address equity.** The statutes fund efforts to close access gaps between groups in our society to high-quality education and career opportunities. The statutes support efforts to empower all individuals to achieve academically and to attain the degrees and credentials they need to thrive.

**Can we bring educators together across the sectors for professional learning, planning and resource sharing to more effectively serve each student throughout their educational experience?**

Under all three statutes, educators are all charged with meeting the needs of each student and closing gaps in achievement and credential attainment. The statutes fund state and local efforts to bring educators together for professional learning and planning, for example to learn how to tailor instruction for diverse learners, align curricula to standards, integrate academic and technical content into courses and instructional activities, analyze data to identify student needs, implement evidence-based practices and use online learning resources.

ESSA plans tend to provide the most detail about professional learning, with some Perkins and WIOA plans providing little information about opportunities for educators to improve their practice to better serve each student. What little is said about professional learning in the plans describes it as happening in isolation in K-12, CTE and workforce development settings. The siloes appear in plans even for states that have aligned structural elements that could foster collaborative learning toward equity — for example, where the state has aligned the standards for K-12 English language arts and math, CTE and adult education, and where the state department of education is the governing agency for ESSA and Perkins and is in charge of supporting professional learning for adult educators under WIOA.

**Can we better coordinate support services for individuals in need, so more can prepare for well-paying careers in the state's most in-demand fields?**

Plans say that the state and local educators will provide struggling learners and those facing barriers to success with a variety of services to enable them to improve their learning and take better advantage of education and training opportunities. Support services named include tutoring, before- and after-school learning, counseling, transportation, financial aid, nutrition support, mental health services, childcare and housing assistance.

## Working together toward equity: Maryland

**Strong statewide vision and follow-through:** In 2016, the state legislature established the [Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#), nicknamed the Kirwan Commission, to recommend changes to the state preK-12 education system and improve the education to workforce pipeline.

- **Each of the commission's recommendations and related legislation (including House Bill 1300, [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#), and House Bill 1 of 2020) aims to close achievement gaps between students based on income, race and ethnicity, and other factors:**
  - Early learning: While expanding pre-kindergarten to all three- and four-year-olds, the state will make it free for low-income families (and will implement a sliding cost scale for families of other income levels).
  - Teacher workforce: The state will diversify the teacher corps and train all teachers in practices to better meet the instructional and social-emotional needs of all students.
  - Instruction: As the state increases the academic and technical rigor of programs, schools will offer more supports for students who struggle to meet college and career readiness benchmarks – for example, improved programs for English learners and special education students, 11th and 12th grade programs with project-based courses, summer instruction, tutoring, and enhanced career counseling.
  - Services: Wrap-around services for students and families will include expanded before- and after-school and summer academic programs, and health and social services.
- **Funds to support equity efforts:**
  - Above the increased funds for education overall, schools serving high concentrations of struggling students and students living in poverty will receive additional funds.
  - The legislature allocated \$850 million in 2019 to begin implementation.
  - 2020's House Bill 1300 mandated several future rounds of funding increases and revised the state education funding formula.
- **Implementation follow-through: Maryland's work here stands out, as follow-through is where many well-intentioned equity plans fall short.**
  - The state legislature established an independent Accountability and Implementation Board to monitor implementation and results. The Board will develop an implementation plan and metrics for measuring its success specific to each school district.
  - Teams of education experts, teachers, administrators and state department staff members will help schools and CTE programs that do not meet milestones.

**Innovative school model:** [Maryland's Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools \(P-TECH\)](#) are innovative grade 9-14 public schools that create pathways from high school to college and careers for young people from all academic backgrounds. In six years or less, students complete CTE programs of study, graduate with a high school diploma and earn a two-year associate degree in a high-demand career, at no cost. Each P-TECH school works with industry partners and a local community college to ensure an academically rigorous and economically relevant curriculum. The program includes one-on-one mentoring, workplace visits, skills instruction, paid summer internships, and first-in-line consideration for jobs with a school's partnering company. Currently, Maryland has P-TECH schools in six school systems, including some with the most diverse student populations in the state. Maryland uses Perkins funds and state funds to support the program.

*Read more about Maryland's efforts in the SHARED VISION section on page 7.*

However, most plans do not describe how state agencies will help local educators, businesses and community partners deliver targeted services to individuals or how they can work together across the K-12, CTE and workforce preparation sectors to do it. Neither do the plans discuss how the services can be focused where the federal funds are meant to have the most impact — preparing individuals to find jobs and advance in careers in the state’s most in-demand industries.

**Can we collaborate more to engage with all those who have a stake in helping people succeed and preparing the state’s workforce, to strengthen and streamline planning?**

While developing their current plans, leaders undertook massive efforts to involve shareholders in identifying issues of equity and planning strategies to address them. However, state leaders did so separately under each statute (except when working on their new combined Perkins V-WIOA plans). States took this siloed approach even though all three statutes require leaders to engage largely the same groups of shareholders — elected officials, business leaders, state agencies, educators, parents, community and social service organizations, and individuals representing the populations served. States took this siloed approach despite the fact that individuals move through all three systems, proceeding from the early grades into CTE programs and then into job training and upskilling as they get older and enter the workforce. States took this siloed approach even though educators in all three sectors implement shared strategies including in-demand career pathways; work-based learning; and supporting student transitions through K-12, CTE, postsecondary education, job training and career upskilling.

Industry or sector partnerships provide a strategy to break down these silos. A required strategy under WIOA, industry or sector partnerships bring together educators across sectors with leaders in industry, labor and communities. Partners develop education programs that meet the needs of businesses and increase career opportunities for all individuals, especially those facing the greatest barriers to success.

5



**Do the ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS required by all three statutes produce a coherent set of performance expectations?**

**Do we use the requirements and flexibility in the laws to point everyone toward our state’s vision?**

ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA each require states to establish a set of indicators, and measures within the indicators, to hold the state and local providers accountable for progress. States that do not take full advantage of these elements in the laws miss opportunities to help educators, policymakers, businesses and the public understand the work within a comprehensive context and identify opportunities to collaborate.

**Raise awareness of the aligned required accountability indicators.** Several of the required indicators in the three statutes match or align, providing a seamless set of data on progress and challenges spanning the early grades through adulthood. However, few states’ plans even mention this overlap. See the table on page 15 for details.

**Take advantage of flexibility to tailor indicators to the state’s vision.** In all three statutes, states can select some of the measures within the required indicators and can add indicators where needed to address state priorities. Very few state plans describe their selection of measures as a strategy to focus expectations across K-12, CTE and workforce development. As well, very few states have added indicators to their systems beyond those required. See the table on page 15 for details.

**Define and develop meaningful credentials together.** State leaders can strengthen the value of accountability measures that track credential attainment by establishing a process and criteria for identifying credentials that require earners to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills required by jobs in in-demand industries. Industry

and sector partnerships provide a structure for bringing industry leaders together with educators to identify the required knowledge and skills and design the associated education and training toward the credential.

**Do all the plans explain how the state will report accountability data to promote communication and collaboration toward the state’s vision?**

All three statutes require states to annually report on state and local progress toward the goals in the

statutes. Most state plans, however, do not mention the goals or reports related to the other statutes. By helping educators and the public find and use reports from all three sectors, state leaders can foster better understanding of how the efforts fit together and target funds more strategically within the education and workforce development pipeline.

REQUIRED ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATOR ALIGNMENTS		FLEXIBILITY FOR ALIGNMENT TO STATE PRIORITIES
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› ESSA requires indicators for academic achievement in English language arts, math, and English language proficiency for English learners.</li> <li>› Perkins V at the secondary level requires matching indicators to those under ESSA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Under all three statutes, states could focus measures or add indicators to track achievement in disciplines critical for the state’s in-demand industries.</li> </ul>
ATTAINMENT OF CREDENTIALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› ESSA requires an indicator for attainment of secondary credentials – high school graduation rate.</li> <li>› Perkins V at the secondary level requires an indicator for the graduation rate to match that under ESSA.</li> <li>› Perkins V requires indicators of attainment of postsecondary credentials.</li> <li>› WIOA requires an indicator for attainment of secondary and postsecondary credentials, and one tracking education or training and skill gains toward a postsecondary credential (or employment).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Under ESSA, states can select school quality or student success measures that include attainment of postsecondary credentials or progress toward credentials.</li> <li>› Under all three statutes, states could focus measures or add indicators to track achievement and skill gains in fields critical for the state’s in-demand industries.</li> </ul>
WORK-BASED LEARNING		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Under ESSA, states can add a school quality or student success measure for participation in work-based learning.</li> <li>› Perkins V establishes a secondary level program quality indicator, for which states can select a measure of participation in work-based learning.</li> <li>› Under WIOA, states could add an indicator to track work-based learning.</li> <li>› Under all three statutes, states could focus these measures on work-based learning in in-demand industries, not just in general.</li> </ul>
EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Perkins V requires indicators to track employment rates of CTE concentrators after program exit.</li> <li>› WIOA requires an indicator tracking education or training and skill gains toward employment (or a postsecondary credential).</li> <li>› WIOA requires an indicator of employment rates and earnings of participants after program exit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Under ESSA, states can select measures for the school quality or student success indicator that include employment rates of graduates.</li> <li>› Under all three statutes, states could focus employment measures on in-demand industries, not just in general.</li> </ul>

## Using accountability to establish a coherent set of performance expectations: Delaware and North Carolina

**Delaware: Beyond the alignment of indicators required by the statutes as described on page 15, Delaware takes advantage of the flexibility to further align performance expectations.**

### **Attainment of credentials:**

- For the ESSA school quality or student success indicator, Delaware includes measures for students accomplishing the following credential-related milestones.
  - Credits earned: On track to graduate in ninth grade
  - Exam scores: AP 3, IB 4, SAT essay proficient; Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery 50
  - Credentials: State-approved industry credential or postsecondary credit toward a credential
- For the Perkins V secondary program quality indicator, Delaware includes measures for attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials and accrual of postsecondary credits in the relevant CTE programs of study.

### **Work-based learning:**

- For the ESSA school quality or student success indicator, Delaware includes a measure for completion of work-based learning or co-ops.
- For the Perkins V secondary program quality indicator, Delaware includes a measure for participation in work-based learning.

### **Commitment to collaborate across sectors:**

- Delaware will require local CTE providers to address the accountability expectations set under ESSA and WIOA, as well as those under Perkins V. In their applications for Perkins V dollars, providers must describe how they will do this.

### **North Carolina: State leaders consider a systemic report card.**

Leaders in North Carolina are considering developing an annual workforce development system report card. The report card, in a dashboard format, would provide policymakers and the public with access to progress data for efforts funded by both WIOA and state workforce funds. North Carolina could expand such a report card to include data on related metrics under ESSA and Perkins V, or the report card could link readers to the related ESSA and Perkins V reports.

6



Do all three of our plans clearly describe how the state will support coordinated **USE OF DATA** for improvement?

### Do all three plans clearly describe how state agencies will coordinate data sharing?

Key areas where state leaders can support improved data sharing include the following.

**Economic and workforce trends data.** In some states, the plans describe different ways that educators access data on trends in the economy and industry workforce needs. All three plans should guide educators and policymakers to the same sources for this key information, for example, to statistics published by the state department of labor or commerce.

**Data systems.** Several states' plans stress the need to better link data systems and maintain a state longitudinal data system to track student, educator and program data across K-12, CTE, higher education and workforce development programs. The plans note that local providers use several different intake systems, case management systems, career information systems and job search platforms — often to serve the same groups of participants. This leads to duplicative work and hinders information sharing. A few state plans also stress the need for a system to track the industry credentials individuals earn, which educators under all three statutes could use to strengthen career pathways.

**Data sharing agreements.** Many of the plans stress the need to improve processes for sharing data across agencies and institutions, to foster better coordination of efforts. Leaders across the sectors could inventory the data sharing agreements that need to be executed and updated, and tackle them together.

### Do the plans lay out a shared approach to using data to improve?

**Analytical capacity.** A few plans note the need to increase the state's capacity to conduct data

analysis, research, evaluation and reporting. Leaders of the agencies administering the three statutes could inventory the capacity at each agency in terms of staffing, expertise, technology and other resources. With knowledge of cross-agency capacity, leaders could identify ways to provide each other, local educators and the public with better information to guide the efforts.

**Monitoring local practice.** The three laws expect state agencies to ensure that local providers meet statutory requirements. To do this, states' plans mention various ways in which state agency staff will analyze data and conduct site visits. However, the review schedules do not coordinate or even mention each other. For example, under one statute the state sets five-year monitoring cycles for all providers and annual cycles for providers needing improvement, while under the other two statutes these schedules reflect two- or three- year cycles. If state agencies align their review cycles, agency staff can share more data in real time, economize staff workloads and leverage each other's expertise — and even save time for the local staff involved in working with state monitors. All parties could deepen their understanding of education across the K-12 to workforce pipeline and could better coordinate their efforts. The overlapping accountability system indicators provide natural places for state agencies to cooperate in monitoring local efforts to meet targets.

**Supporting improvement efforts.** Under all three statutes, local providers needing improvement must use data to develop improvement plans. Yet, few of the state plans mention that this kind of planning also happens under the other two statutes. Neither do most state plans mention how the agencies administering the other statutes deploy similar sets of supports for data-based improvement, such as guidance, professional learning and technical assistance. State agencies could coordinate these supports in areas of common need. For example, in a K-12 district, teachers in a secondary CTE program and all other teachers may need to learn about open educational resources. At a community college, instructors teaching CTE courses and those teaching WIOA adult education programs may all need to learn how to differentiate instruction. Educators in K-12 programs, CTE programs and

workforce training programs may all need assistance to improve programs and services within career pathways. By coordinating supports for overlapping needs, state agency staff could leverage each

other's expertise, resources and time. Some state plans do mention this kind of collaboration, but the statements are so general that it is difficult to discern how the agencies will accomplish it.

## Coordinating data use for continuous improvement: Kentucky

### State agencies coordinate data systems to provide a common source of high-quality, secure data.

- [The Kentucky Center for Statistics \(KYSTATS\)](#) maintains the state longitudinal data system. This system integrates data from the state department of education, council on postsecondary education, education professional standards board, higher education assistance authority, education and workforce development cabinet, and cabinet for health and family services.
- KYSTATS collects and links data to evaluate education and workforce efforts across the state. KYSTATS provides leaders in state agencies with a variety of data and reports, including the labor market information used for ESSA, Perkins and WIOA planning.
- [Kentucky's Technical Education Data System](#) captures all secondary and postsecondary CTE data and produces customizable reports about CTE participants and programs. TEDS links to other student information systems at the state level, including KYSTATS.
- Leaders of the state entities listed above comprise the KYSTATS governing board. This facilitates cross-agency collaboration, efficient data governance and strong data protection.

### Increasing coordinated, data-based planning and improvement: The state department of education plans to

- Coordinate analysis of risk data for local schools and districts.
- Consolidate on-site monitoring visits for programs under ESSA, Perkins V and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Increase collaboration of staff in the Office of Career and Technical Education and Student Transition and the office for Title IV of ESSA. The teams will jointly offer professional development for administrators and school counselors on providing a well-rounded education, CTE programs of study, dual credit and strategies to increase student persistence to graduation.

## NEXT STEPS

State leaders can take three steps to ensure that their plans for ESSA, Perkins V and WIOA set a united course of action toward improvement of the state's workforce.

1

2020

**As your state finalizes its new Perkins V and WIOA plans and determines if updates to your ESSA plan are needed, use the questions and examples in this document** to ensure that you have established a “north star” vision for the state's workforce in 2030 and have aligned resources across the public education to workforce development pipeline to that vision.

2

Each year of implementation

**Bring state leaders and shareholders together regularly, for example quarterly, to promote effective implementation** of plans.

- Share progress and problem solve. Spread success fast and nip challenges in the bud.
- Persevere. Breaking down siloes takes time and requires a culture shift.
- Use what you learn to inform the next round of plan updates. New Perkins V and WIOA plans cover 2020-2023. States can update all the plans when needed — as often as annually for ESSA and Perkins V and every 2 years for WIOA.

3

Along the way

**Call on SREB for support.** SREB works with states to support their advancement of all levels of education and improve the social and economic vitality of the region. SREB is here to:

- Provide research, data and recommendations on issues of importance to states.
- Bring states together to learn, share best practices and collaborate.
- Work side by side with policymakers and educators as they plan and implement efforts.

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