



PLTW

# Maximizing Perkins V Funds with Project Lead The Way

In communities across the country, educators, career and technical education (CTE) leaders, and industry experts are working together to leverage the Carl D. Perkins Act to provide students with access to high-quality career learning experiences.

Project Lead The Way (PLTW) is proud to be part of these efforts and has impacted millions of students across all 50 states in the country. Our programs are designed to empower students to learn transportable, in-demand skills validated by the world's leading companies, while providing an invaluable connection between what students are learning in the classroom today and how it applies to the career paths they'll take in the future. Through this approach, PLTW has become a leader in achieving the goals and outcomes championed by the Perkins Act.

Now, with new opportunities made available by the reauthorization of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), we can continue working together to expand access to CTE programs and help more students gain the skills they need to thrive in college, career, and beyond.

Perkins V provides states and districts with the flexibility to be innovative and ambitious in developing plans that will continue to expand student access to high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for success in their future careers. As states set their overall vision for career and technical education and reflect that vision in their Perkins V state plans, we hope PLTW can continue to be a key strategy and partner in that work.



Consider the following opportunities to strengthen your plans and maximize Perkins V funds with PLTW:

## Middle Grades CTE Expansion

A notable change in Perkins V modifies the previous definition of CTE to include “career exploration at the high school level or as early as the middle grades,”<sup>1</sup> defined as grades five through eight. This revision marks the first time that Perkins funds can be used for comprehensive CTE programs in those grades, allowing districts to consider Perkins V funds for implementation of the PLTW Launch and PLTW Gateway programs.

- PLTW Launch – designed for grades PreK through five – taps into students’ exploratory nature, engages them in hands-on learning experiences, encourages them to keep discovering, and empowers them to adopt a design-thinking mindset.
- PLTW Gateway – designed for grades six through eight – is a hands-on program that boosts classroom engagement and excitement, drives collaboration, and sparks “aha!” moments and deep comprehension.

Both programs engage students in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science, and provide opportunities for career exploration as students work through hands-on, real-world activities, projects, and problems that help them envision the career paths and possibilities available to them.



I learned about engineering and what it takes to excel in an industry dominated by people who didn’t look like me or speak like me.”

— PLTW Gateway Student, Coulwood Middle School, Charlotte, North Carolina

## Professional Development

Providing professional development for teachers and other practitioners is a required use of Perkins funds. Take advantage of this and consider the flexible, robust training options offered by PLTW, including in-person, online, and job-embedded professional development.

These hands-on learning experiences challenge teachers to look at their classrooms in a new way and immerse them in the role of the student. Additionally, career learning opportunities embedded in PLTW Professional Development help bring industry experiences to life and empower teachers to take this inspiration back to the classroom.

This makes PLTW Professional Development a great opportunity for teachers to develop advanced knowledge and pedagogical practices, integrate academic standards within CTE courses, and develop their understanding of current industry equipment, technologies, standards, and credentials. Ensure your state plan continues to allow Perkins funds to support PLTW Professional Development.

“One thing that really stands out about this Core Training was that we were able to see directly how PLTW transfers into real-world careers by touring the FedEx World Hub. From seeing inputs and outputs, to automation and robotics, to coding and problem solving, this experience has made it clear that when we give students the opportunity to learn these skills, we are guiding them in a direction that prepares them for success in their future careers.”

— Kim Heilenbach, PLTW Gateway Teacher, Sunset Ridge School, Northfield, Illinois

## Aligned with Industry Needs

Perkins V maintains a focus on aligning CTE with industry needs. A key change with the reauthorization is a new reference to “employability skills.” Now, states and districts can intentionally incorporate programs that teach skills like problem solving, communication, collaboration, and other in-demand, transportable skills that are critical to students’ success in college and are proven to be the most demanded and valued in the job market.<sup>2</sup>

PLTW designs its curriculum with these skills in mind by collaborating with industry experts, university partners, and educators across the country to identify learning objectives aligned to the skills that employers desire. Through PLTW’s activity-, project-, problem-based (APB) instructional approach, students not only build knowledge and skills in the fields of computer science, engineering, and biomedical science, but also develop in-

demand, transportable – or employability – skills, such as problem solving, critical and creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and ethical reasoning. States can take advantage of this new and important emphasis by ensuring PLTW courses are highlighted in Perkins plans and integrated into Programs of Study options.

Additionally, in designing the high school End-of-Course Assessment – the first of its kind to measure both subject- matter knowledge and mastery of transportable skills – PLTW again collaborated (and continues to partner) with experts in industry, higher education, and secondary education to ensure the test has meaning across all three sectors and has clear and tangible value for students. Thus, the goal is not only to prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in college and careers, but to measure their technical knowledge and transportable skills in a meaningful way that allows them to clearly demonstrate them to both colleges and employers.

“For years, we’ve sought graduates who have mastered the types of skills PLTW students gain through their coursework but have faced increased challenges in identifying those who are ready to hit the ground running in the workplace. By giving businesses a tool to validate these skills, PLTW is making it possible for employers like Toyota to recognize and hire the top talent we need to drive our business forward.”

— Brian Krinock, Toyota Motor North America senior vice president, vehicle plants

In addition to validating the knowledge and skills students gain from PLTW coursework, PLTW’s industry partners offer mentoring, internships, and career-related opportunities, and advocate for PLTW programs to give more students access to real-world learning experiences.

Recently, PLTW also partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeships to provide a comprehensive apprenticeship skills and knowledge framework that schools and industry can customize to meet local apprenticeship needs. The PLTW National Guidelines for Apprenticeship Standards:

- Were developed in conjunction with the information technology, engineering, and biomedical sectors;
- Facilitate a much easier and faster implementation of a registered apprenticeship program; and

- Can be adopted and used by PLTW programs and business partners to engage Project Lead The Way high school students in apprenticeship opportunities.

PLTW's registration of computer science, engineering, and biomedical science standards are for the following occupations: IT generalist, engineering assistant, and medical assistant.

These apprenticeship opportunities offer schools and districts another way to extend CTE beyond the classroom and empower students to gain real-world industry experience – all before leaving high school.

**“** My experience with PLTW solidified my interest in my pursuit of medicine, and specifically biochemistry, because it gave me a taste of a more hands-on and involved approach to a field I had expressed interest in, but was unable to experience tangibly in my regular classes. It was an absolute competitive advantage coming into college.

— PLTW alumnus Kacee Daniels

**i** We want to continue to strengthen our partnership as your state is preparing its plan. Let us be a resource for you during this process. Visit the School Locator on [pltw.org](http://pltw.org) to find PLTW programs in your area and make connections, collaborate, and share how you can maximize Perkins V funds with PLTW.

1. 20 U.S.C. § 2032(5)(D)

2. The Power of Transportable Skills: Assessing the Demand and Value of the Skills of the Future. Project Lead The Way and Burning Glass Technologies, 2019, [www2.pltw.org/TransportableSkillsReport](http://www2.pltw.org/TransportableSkillsReport).