

# PERKINS 101

## Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA)

The most significant new component of the current iteration of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, as amended in 2018 and commonly known as Perkins V, is the introduction of a comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA). The purpose of the CLNA is to better align labor market information, student access and success data, and program offerings to help local recipients make funding and programmatic decisions based on the real-world needs of students, families, employers and communities.

*The CLNA was inspired by needs assessment language included in the last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015. That legislation requires school districts to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment if receiving a significant amount of funding under the Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program. It also includes needs assessment language related to several other programs and funding streams.*

### Purpose of the CLNA

The CLNA requires local CTE providers to engage in a meaningful, data-driven program improvement process that considers CTE program quality, student performance and supports, and labor market alignment. The CLNA offers a powerful opportunity to engage stakeholders in a common understanding and vision for the future of CTE in a local community.

### CLNA Process

In order to obtain Perkins funding from their state, local recipients such as school districts and community and technical colleges were required to conduct an initial needs assessment by Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. Local recipients were required to use these needs assessments to inform their four-year local application, describing how they would use “funds to develop, coordinate, implement, or improve career and technical education programs to meet the needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.”

Following that first CLNA, local recipients must update their CLNAs at least once every two years, depending on the timeline set by each state.

Both the initial assessment and CLNA updates must evaluate – in collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders such as educators, business and industry partners, parents and students – the following components:

- Student performance on Perkins V accountability indicators, disaggregated by a number of learner groups
- Alignment of programs to labor market needs

- Whether programs are of sufficient size, scope and quality to meet all students' needs
- Progress toward implementing programs and [programs of study](#)
- Efforts to improve recruitment, retention and training of faculty and staff
- Progress toward improving student access

## Stakeholder Engagement

Perkins V requires local recipients to engage with a diverse body of stakeholders to ensure a rigorous and meaningful needs assessment process. The law names, at a minimum, the following participants who must be included in conducting the CLNA and developing the local application. These stakeholders must also be engaged after local application development through ongoing consultation:

- CTE program representatives at the secondary and postsecondary levels, including teachers, faculty, administrators, career guidance and advisement professionals, and other staff
- State or local workforce development board representatives
- Representatives from a range of local businesses and industries
- Parents and students
- Representatives of the [special populations](#) defined in the law
- Representatives from agencies serving at-risk, homeless and out-of-school youth
- Representatives from Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations, where applicable

## State Role

State agencies have a significant role in guiding local recipients through the CLNA process. Each state was required to develop an initial CLNA template for local recipients to complete that included at minimum the six required components named earlier. Several states chose to add additional topics to their CLNA templates, such as requiring recipients to describe their career exploration activities. And, as CLNAs are updated, some states are continuing to refine and revise their templates to better capture findings or streamline the process.

States are also responsible for developing and communicating CLNA timelines and for providing directions to local recipients on how to submit their CLNAs. Many states provide a variety of other tools and supports to help local recipients maximize the CLNA process:

- Perkins enrollment and performance data
- State or regional labor market data
- Technical assistance for conducting the CLNA
- Opportunities to engage with stakeholders
- Directions for incorporating CLNA findings into annual budgets

In some states, there are separate templates, timelines and/or submission processes for secondary recipients and for postsecondary recipients. In other states, secondary and postsecondary CLNAs are more closely aligned.

## Organizing the CLNA

Many states direct each local recipient to conduct their own CLNA. However, some states have required or encouraged local recipients to join together to conduct the CLNA at a regional level.

In a few states, such as Minnesota, each local recipient of Perkins is not an individual district or institution but is instead a consortium of secondary and postsecondary CTE providers within a region of the state. In this case, the CLNA is conducted at the consortium level.

Several other states that do not organize local recipients into secondary-postsecondary consortia for fiscal purposes have still required or encouraged local recipients within a region to band together to conduct all or part of the CLNA collaboratively. In some states, this team approach impacts only the evaluation of labor market alignment, while in other states, it includes conducting the entire CLNA collaboratively.

### **Updating the CLNA**

Each state determines how local recipients will update their CLNAs. In some states, the state has directed local recipients to conduct the full CLNA for each update. In other states, the state has guided local recipients to reaffirm the initial CLNA's findings and consider progress made toward implementing action steps and meeting goals developed from the initial CLNA.

In addition, each state determines whether the CLNA update will occur every two years or more frequently. Most states have chosen the biannual schedule required in the law.

### **Learn More**

To learn more about the topics addressed in this brief, consult the following resources:

- [Perkins 101: Introduction to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins 101: Federal Funding](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins 101: Accountability](#) (ACTE, 2025)
- [Perkins V: The Official Guide to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (ACTE, 2018)
- [ACTE's Quality CTE Program of Study Framework Self-evaluation: A Tool for the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment](#) (ACTE, 2021)
- [Maximizing Perkins V's Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment & Local Application](#) (ACTE, 2019)
- [Lessons in Collaboration and Innovation: The Impact and Promise of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment](#) (Advance CTE & ACTE, 2022)
- [CLNA Resources](#) (Advance CTE)