

### Partnerships For Innovation: A Unique Consortium Structure

The Perkins IV (2006) challenged all states to address new requirements outlined in the legislation. Nebraska leadership created a statewide system to accomplish program improvement and increased student achievement. To assist schools and community colleges to meet the requirements of Perkins IV, Nebraska crafted a statewide consortium which combined a small portion of resources collectively. The Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) provides a unique mechanism across the state and ultimately reduces the need for every local grant recipient to meet the intent of the law alone. The statewide consortium addresses the following components of the law: statewide agreements, technical skill assessments, data and accountability systems, and strategic professional development.

As written in the Nebraska State Perkins Basic Grant (Title I) Plan each member of the consortium allocates a portion of their grant to the Partnerships for Innovation. In 2010 the governing body of PFI reduced the local contribution from ten to nine percent. This structure has been implemented by several states to support development of statewide systems. Minnesota and Georgia have used this requirement for several years to strengthen the improvement efforts of career education; however Nebraska is the only state with a Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) consortium structure. The following will explain in greater detail the elements and program of work involved.

#### PFI Areas of Focus

##### Secondary-Postsecondary Transition

Under the previous Perkins legislation, consortia were created and funded with the Title II funds termed Tech Prep. Excellent work came out of Tech Prep programs; however student mobility exacerbated the challenge that Nebraska's courses and programs were not aligned across the state.

Building on the Tech Prep model, the development of a statewide system, Nebraska Career and Technical Education (CTE) students have more opportunities to transition to further education or employment at various self-determined stop-out points along a chosen career path. Examples of this work include:

- Crafting statewide programs of study aligning to postsecondary programs in the state, at both the community college and university level
- Expanding opportunities for dual credit within CTE
- Developing new partnerships between secondary and postsecondary education to expand the use of distance learning and on-line courses to increase availability of career education courses to secondary students, especially in rural areas and small schools.

#### How has PFI done this?

##### *Visioning and Standards Revision Workshops*

Partnerships for Innovation in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education have hosted the Visioning Forums and Standards Revision Workshops. Fifteen of the 16 Career Clusters® were addressed by the end of the 2012 school year. The Visioning Forum attracted business, industry and professional organization representatives, high school, college and university faculty, the Nebraska Department of Labor and other affiliated organizations to identify the Career Pathways within the Career Cluster© or

Field appropriate to develop for high school students transitioning into postsecondary education or direct employment. These have been well received in all employment sectors.

The Standards Writing Workshops were hosted in the following summer. Secondary and postsecondary faculty, using college course outlines and the National Career Cluster® Knowledge and Skills Statements, identified standards, benchmarks and sample performance indicators. By using the work of Jay McTighe & Grant Wiggins, the courses were 'designed with the end in mind'. The first course under development was the final course in the sequence, which is typically college-level or industry-level content. Subsequently, the second and first courses were crafted based on the outcomes of the final course.

The Nebraska Department of Education has developed a website which houses the Programs of Study and course standards. The website can be found here: <http://cestandards.education.ne.gov>

Dual credit can only be granted by a partnering postsecondary institution. To maintain accreditation, it is imperative that the colleges and universities abide by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements, so dual credit is still available on a case-by-case basis; however, the content of the courses is more strongly aligned and provides a good platform for future collaboration as a result of this process.

### Career Academy Leadership

Partnerships for Innovation has hosted bi-annual (every spring and fall) meetings for Career Academy coordinators and directors since November 2008. As a result, leadership had the opportunity to:

1. provide input to the Career Academy Rule; as outlined by the Nebraska Legislature
2. provide input to the Postsecondary Coordinating Commission's study on Dual Credit and Career Academies
3. establish Statewide Quality Indicators
4. identify measurable data sets which will be recorded by the Nebraska Department of Education Student Records System
5. attend the 2010 and 2011 National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) Conference, and
6. participate in statewide networking and collaboration.

The PFI website lists the calendar of events open to interested parties.

### Technical Skill Assessment

Perkins IV requires a new and greater emphasis on technical skill assessment. In the past, Nebraska has been allowed to use grade point average (GPA) as a measure of technical skill attainment. Under Perkins IV, we have strived to use college delivered course content and industry-based certifications as a measure of student success. This shift ensures students have the skill sets needed to advance to the next level of education or employment without remediation.

### Statewide Partnerships

PFI provides the potential for securing statewide license agreements that are determined priority need areas for the state. Examples of this include current and previous licenses, but are not limited to:

Current

- Nebraska Career Connections, powered by Kuder, Inc.
- Economic Modeling Specialist Incorporated data bank
- Innovative Educators

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## Nebraska Career Education

### Previous

- High Schools That Work/Making Middle Grades Work Statewide Membership
- National Entrepreneurship Consortium Statewide Membership
- National Student Clearinghouse follow-up data system resources
- National Repository for Online Courses
- Todaysclass.com: Intro to Automotive and Intro to Health Sciences
- National Consortium Health Science Education

### Professional Development

Planning and coordination of professional development may include skill training in emerging areas, technical skill development, and training in new instructional strategies and approaches for secondary and postsecondary instructors. To date, these are the professional development opportunities which have been sponsored by *Partnerships for Innovation*.

- 2009** UNMC/AHEC Health Science Institute, Insurance Institute, and '09 NEXUS Conference
- 2010** UNMC/AHEC Health Science Institute, Personal Finance Institute, NACEP Conference, NCAC Conference, and '10 NEXUS Conference
- 2011** Entrepreneurship Infusion, Fall Workshops, Health Science Institute, '11 NEXUS Conference
- 2012** Personal Finance Institute, CASE Ag Education, Secondary Career Education Leadership Academy, Community College Leadership NOW!, STEM PLTW development support, NCE Fall Workshops and statewide Innovative Educators membership
- 2013** MCIT Working Connections scholarships, CASE Ag Plant Science, Leadership NOW! (Year 2), Developmental Education Articulation and Completion workshops, Regional Capital Career Center, and NACEP Conference\*
- 2014** Project Lead the Way and Entrepreneurship Infusion

\* *pending final PFI Leadership Council approval at the annual spring budget meeting*

### Curriculum in Emerging Areas

Development of secondary/postsecondary aligned curriculum in new and emerging, or targeted areas the Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) consortium is focused on building systems and capacity for Nebraska to meet the demands of the legislation, but more importantly to increase the flexibility in prioritizing decisions made locally by reducing the administrative on the local education agencies.

### PFI Investment

All eligible secondary and postsecondary Perkins recipients contribute 9% of their allocation to the Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) consortium. PFI is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation, the fiduciary agent. Nebraska Community Foundation does not control the allocation or use of the funds; they are simply serving as the fiscal agent for the consortium. The PFI Leadership Council makes fiduciary decisions on the management and distribution of funds.

### PFI Management

A Leadership Council of local Perkins recipients manages PFI. The Leadership Council consists of one representative from each of the six Nebraska community colleges, four representatives from secondary schools districts and two representatives from Educational Service Units. The Leadership Council sets the annual budget, identifies funding priorities, evaluation criteria, and tracks progress.

In June 2008, the PFI Leadership Council hired a Director to manage the day-to-day operations. The Director reports to the Leadership Council and works in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education and external entities related to Career and Technical Education efforts.

Committees, aligned with the Program of Work have been appointed to address specific priorities. These include: Career and Technical Education Delivery Systems to include Career Academies; Professional Development; Programs of Study and Coordinated Curriculum; Finance, and Common Student Career Planning Tools (i.e. Nebraska Career Connections, powered by Kuder, Inc.).

### Partnerships For Innovation Leadership Council Members

#### Current Members of the Leadership Council

Terry Gaalswyk, Western Community College	gaalswy2@wncc.edu
Carol Andringa, Lincoln Public Schools	candrin@lps.org
Dennis Headrick, Southeast Community College	dheadrick@southeast.edu
Dave Perkins, ESU 7	dperkins@esu7.org
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Deb Brennan, Central Community College	dbrennan@cccneb.edu
Connie Eichhorn, Metropolitan Community College	ceichhorn@mccneb.edu
Julie Otero, Centura Public Schools	julie.otero@esu10.org
Bill Heimann, Waverly Public Schools	bill.heimann@dist145schools.org

#### The Work of PFI

The PFI Leadership Council met in November 2010 to streamline the program of work to align with priorities in the state. The mission statement they developed is: *The Partnerships for Innovation is a collaboration of secondary and postsecondary partners focused on building a better statewide system of Career and Technical Education for Nebraska to improve student learning and better meet economic development priorities. PFI will do this by introducing innovation in delivery systems in CTE to include Career Academies, professional development and programs of study with coordinated curriculum between secondary and postsecondary.*

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## Nebraska Career Education

An up to date outline of the annual program of work can be found on the PFI website [partnershipsforinnovation.org/about-pfi/program-of-work](http://partnershipsforinnovation.org/about-pfi/program-of-work). Each winter, the PFI Leadership Council allocates dollars for external funding requests. Eligible Perkins recipients can apply for funds to lead and/or facilitate the work. Applications are found on the PFI website under Professional Development and are due at the end of January annually. Partners are encouraged to apply for funds which address the PFI initiatives, can be delivered statewide and provide support to both secondary and postsecondary entities.

### The Decision to Require PFI Participation

After several months of gathering input, an invitation was extended to Perkins Grant Administrators to meet on June 6, 2007 at the Nebraska Career Education Conference to provide input into the new state plan. During the discussion, it was determined the work of PFI is so vital to the success of Nebraska Career Education and the implementation of Perkins IV, that participation should be mandatory. The Partnerships for Innovation was written into the Nebraska State Plan, approved by the federal funding agency.

### Coordination of PFI Priorities and Activities

Where possible, PFI will seek to leverage resources and effectiveness with the Nebraska Department of Labor and Education, Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, Nebraska Community Colleges, business and industry, workforce development organizations and economic development initiatives.

### Communication

The *Partnerships for Innovation* strives to communicate regularly with local consortia members through the website [www.partnershipsforinnovation.org](http://www.partnershipsforinnovation.org) and monthly emails. If you would like more information about PFI, activities or would like the Director to visit your school/organization, please contact Erika Volker, Director at 402-305-9480 or [Erika@partnershipsforinnovation.org](mailto:Erika@partnershipsforinnovation.org) <http://www.partnershipsforinnovation.org>

