



# Nebraska State Plan for Career Technical Education

**In fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006  
P. L. 109-270**

## INTRODUCTION

### Guiding Assumptions

Perkins IV maintains much of the program improvement emphasis of Perkins III but requires Nebraska Career and Technical Education to focus on new areas. The following *guiding assumptions* are instrumental in moving Perkins IV forward.

- Federal Perkins IV funding for Nebraska Career and Technical Education (NCTE) is not an entitlement at either the state or local level.
- The use of Perkins IV funds must be focused on school improvement and increased student achievement outcomes.
- NCTE and academic education must be integrated in a comprehensive way emphasizing the academic content of CTE courses.
- NCTE must include comprehensive career guidance as an integral component at all levels of education.
- The skill set needed for success in postsecondary education and for work are one and the same.
- NCTE must be strategically placed within the broader vision, mission and goals for education within the state of Nebraska.

### Nebraska Career Education and Perkins IV Target Areas

The implementation of the Nebraska Career Education model and Perkins IV requires emphasis in areas designed to result in program improvement and increased student achievement. These areas are:

- **Student Achievement**
  - Perkins IV funds must be used to improve student achievement as reflected in the performance measure data required in the law.
  - Quality data and performance measure accountability results must drive decisions about use of Perkins IV funds that results in improved student achievement and program improvement.
  - The new statewide consortium, Partnerships for Innovation, will address issues of statewide data quality and systems development.
  - Emphasis will be placed on developing a new system of measuring technical skill attainment that is consistent with industry certifications and degree/certificate requirements.
- **Secondary/Postsecondary Alignment**
  - Both secondary and postsecondary are required to demonstrate alignment of courses for seamless transition between secondary and postsecondary NCTE programs of study.
  - Partnerships for Innovation will work on the development of statewide articulation of secondary and postsecondary NCTE courses to improve opportunities for student transition.
  - Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions (both 2- and 4- year), Workforce Development, economic development, and Nebraska business and industry.
- **Alignment to Regional Economies and High Skill, High Wage, and High Demand**
  - NCTE course offerings are reviewed to align to the workforce needs of the regional economy. Labor market information is used to inform decisions about programs of study offerings and areas of emphasis for the use of Perkins funds.

- Target Perkins fund use for programs of study that lead to high skill, high wage, and/or high demand occupations.
- Support the instruction, preparation, and resources of entrepreneurs and the opportunities to support innovation in business startups and acquisition.
- **Programs of Study, Curriculum Development,**
  - Programs of study implemented and approved at both secondary and postsecondary levels that align and support the NCE Model.
  - Programs of Study focus on academic and technical rigor in both secondary and postsecondary NCTE courses.
  - Reinforce and strengthen academic competencies through career and technical education courses.
  - Curriculum development supports new and emerging occupations that align with regional economies, labor market information, and economic development priorities.
- **Innovative Delivery Models and Equity of Access to Instruction**
  - All students should have access to quality NCTE courses and programs of study; to highly qualified instructors; and to facilities and technologies that ensure quality NCTE is available regardless of location and size of institution.
  - Innovative delivery strategies, supported through collaboration among schools, institutions, and business and industry partnerships ensure access for Nebraska students to NCTE instruction.
- **Professional Development**
  - Professional Development should promote leadership, disseminate current research and best practice, and enhance knowledge and skills of NCTE instructors, administrators, and counselors resulting in improved quality of NCTE.
  - Professional development must be more than a one-day workshop experience; the emphasis is on a sustained professional development program.
  - Support the recruitment and retention of highly qualified professionals to deliver effective and engaging instruction in all areas of career and technical education.
- **Special Populations**
  - The term Special Populations is defined in the law as individuals with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, migrant, English language learners, and gender under-represented populations (students who are in programs or employment in occupations in which their gender comprises less than 25% of total employment)
  - Nebraska Career Education must be available and provide services to all students, including special populations.
  - Special emphasis must be given to success of special populations in career education courses.
- **School Counseling and Career Guidance**
  - School counseling services, with emphasis on career guidance, are provided to all students.
  - An effective student advisement program that supports students achieving career investigation, exploration, and preparation is essential.
  - Implementing an educational planning process that supports student success as they pursue the career area of their choice is critical.

## Building a High-Quality CTE System: A Vision for the Future

From a beginning in the early 1900's that focused on training young men to return to the farm, career education has been an important part of education in Nebraska. For over a century, as a part of comprehensive high schools and postsecondary institutions, career and technical education has provided students with necessary academic and technical skills for employment. But Nebraska and our world are changing. Moving from reliance on the steam engine to the everyday use of the search engine, rapid changes in technology, globalization, shifting demographics, and increased accountability pressure on education have provided the impetus for rethinking the design and delivery of career and technical education in Nebraska.

Over the past five years, NCTE staff at the Nebraska Department of Education has engaged numerous stakeholders from across the state representing K-12, postsecondary, business and industry, and workforce and economic development partners to develop a conceptual framework for creating Nebraska Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This framework, including a vision, mission statement, and guiding principles set the stage for the work being completed. The State Plan for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 provides support to implement this new framework for Nebraska Career and Technical Education.

### Vision

Nebraska Career and Technical Education provides a world-class program that engages every student in high-quality, rigorous, and relevant education, enhanced with partnerships with business and industry, workforce and economic development that allows students to turn their passion, talent and ability into successful careers and fulfilling lives.

### Mission:

The mission of Career Education in Nebraska is to prepare all individuals to:

**Learn** through career exploration and technical skill development while meeting academic standards,  
**Earn** as productive citizens in a global society, and  
**Live** as a contributing member of their community.

## **Guiding Principles of Nebraska Career and Technical Education**

These guiding principles were developed to provide focus for the work of career and technical education intended to result in outcomes aligned to the mission and vision.

### ***1. Student Achievement in Academic and Technical Excellence***

Nebraska Career and Technical Education (NCTE) provides secondary and postsecondary students, adults, and incumbent workers with educational programs designed to provide the academic and technical knowledge and skills needed in preparation for their career, as well as lifelong learning. NCTE provides a unique educational environment that integrates academic and technical preparation for contextual learning that increases engagement and supports improved achievement for all students.

Nebraska has approved state standards in the four core areas of Math, Science, Reading and Writing, and Social Studies. Other instructional programs are guided by Essential Learnings – a list of outcomes similar to the standards for the core areas. Aligned to Nebraska Standards and guided by Essential Learnings, career and technical education courses reinforce the academic excellence defined by Nebraska’s state standards.

NCTE strives to meet the needs of all students, including special populations. The Perkins IV accountability measures provide a performance index for eligible recipients to analyze current practice and implement improvement strategies.

### ***2. Rigorous and Relevant Learning***

Nebraska Career and Technical Education provides opportunities for learning that is grounded in real-world relevance and application, yet appropriately challenging and rigorous to develop the future-thinking and problem solving abilities desired by business and industry.

Secondary NCTE program content is based on the States Career Cluster Initiative knowledge and skill statements that provide the outcomes for measuring student achievement. These statements also provide the framework for aligning secondary and postsecondary curriculum as a part of a program of study. NCTE at the postsecondary level has always depended upon strong business and industry involvement to determine the knowledge and skills needed by program completers.

NCTE is responsive to labor market, workforce, and economic needs on a state, regional, and local level. This responsiveness provides relevance to the instruction and provides students with transferable skills necessary for success in their future career. NCTE is working as an active partner in rethinking high school efforts focused on improving the rigor, relevance, and relationships in high schools.

### ***3. Career Development and Management***

Exploring the world of work using the 16 career clusters broadens students’ knowledge of career possibilities. The work of career development and management is a partnership between School Counseling and NCTE. School Counseling is considered an integral component of Nebraska Career and Technical Education. The continuum of guidance provided includes career awareness in elementary school, career exploration in middle school, and career preparation in secondary and postsecondary education.

Nebraska Career Connections provides a “K-grey” (birth to death) web-based tool allowing all Nebraskans access throughout their career. Promoting the concept of lifelong learning, Nebraska Career Connections promotes career management as appropriate throughout the career development continuum. It provides opportunities to develop a personal career and education plan, explore postsecondary education opportunities and create a personal portfolio that can be used throughout their life.

#### ***4. Extended Learning Opportunities***

On both the secondary and postsecondary levels, NCTE offers integrated curricula through programs of study in the career clusters and pathways. An essential component of the integrated curricula provides activities and experiences outside the normal classroom and laboratory setting. These are called extended learning opportunities and include, but are not limited to workbased learning, service learning, community problem solving and student leadership opportunities.

Student leadership is a vital component of Nebraska Career and Technical Education. These experiences are provided in a variety of ways, but most effectively through the career student organizations supported by NTCE. These include DECA, DEX, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, PBL, and SkillsUSA..

#### ***5. Professional Development***

An effective NCTE program requires highly prepared instructors, administrators, and staff who are supported by sustained, high-quality, and relevant professional development. NCTE professional development includes effective pre-service in both content and pedagogy, relevant and timely in-service, and pursuit of advanced degrees.

A new area of emphasis is the recruitment and retention of endorsed NCTE instructors to ensure there is an adequate supply of qualified faculty who are knowledgeable in their technical areas as well as in the academic competencies and workplace requirements essential to their NCTE program areas.

#### ***6. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement***

The quality and effectiveness of Nebraska Career and Technical Education is dependent on the ability to consistently evaluate and improve. Effective valuation of programs based on sound data and stakeholder input is essential. Based on this data-informed evaluation, the cycle of continuous improvement must be a constant area of emphasis.

Strong and effective NCTE leadership is critical at both the local and state level. Developing and sustaining this leadership will help to ensure the consistent evaluation and continuous improvement needed to keep NCTE responsive to changing workforce and economic demands. It is important to always view NCTE systemically by taking a broad perspective in evaluating NCTE’s contribution to Nebraska’s economic future rather than focusing on discrete secondary or postsecondary programs, or specific funding streams.

#### ***7. Effective Partnerships***

The potential scope and impact of NCTE is uniquely linked to the world of work and requires the direct participation of and partnership with business and industry, workforce and economic development to maximize program quality for all students. These partnerships must exist at the local, regional, and state level. Through effective partnerships, NCTE can maximize the use of limited resources and address the unique needs of our state’s economy.