

# Minnesota's Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment Guide

For the submission of Strengthening Career and Technical Education  
for the 21st Century (Perkins V) Local Application

September 2019

## About This Guide

This document provides Minnesota Perkins Consortia Leaders context on how to conduct the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). This guide translates language of the law into concrete, actionable steps for conducting a rigorous needs assessment that meets the Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) requirements.

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## PART ONE: THE REQUIREMENT

Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) Under Perkins V

One of the most significant changes introduced in the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) is the new Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). Specifically, the law states: *"To be eligible to receive financial assistance under this part, an eligible recipient shall—(A) conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment related to career and technical education and include the results of the needs assessment in the local application submitted under subsection (a); and (B) not less than once every 2 years, update such comprehensive local needs assessment."* SEC 134(c)

## Why Require a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment?

Members of Congress and the employer community who worked on Perkins reauthorization made it a clear priority to better align CTE with all parts of the workforce development system. To ensure progress on this, they developed requirements in Perkins V for a new, formal process that would support data-driven decision-making directed toward program improvement, alignment with workforce needs, and progress in closing equity gaps in CTE.

While the CLNA may appear to be an exercise in compliance, in reality, it ensures that consortium CTE program decision-making is data driven. The needs assessment helps consortium CTE leaders identify, understand, and prioritize their needs and strategies in order to improve student performance and program quality. In short, the CLNA is the foundation of Perkins V implementation at the consortium level that will drive development of the consortium application and guide spending decisions.

## What Are the Benefits to the Consortium?

- When the CLNA is complete, a consortium will have a set of findings that paints an accurate picture of local CTE programs. This creates an incredible opportunity to:
- Better help all students achieve career success
- Align Perkins budget with priorities and make certain programs are aligned with and validated by local/regional workforce needs and economic priorities
- Ensure that consortium programs are serving all learners equitably and to enable you to better direct resources toward programs that lead to high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations and activities that address equity and opportunity gaps
- Build on other process improvement efforts [Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) planning, World's Best Workforce (WBWF), and others]
- Provide a structured way to engage key stakeholders regularly around the quality and impact of consortium CTE programs and systems
- Ultimately, the local needs assessment process is about helping applicants make a formal shift from merely collecting and reporting information to using information strategically to drive decisions about consortium CTE programs that help create success for students, employers, and the community.

## How Often Do You Conduct a CLNA?

The law requires a local recipient to conduct a CLNA every two years. The CLNA lends itself well to devising a multi-year plan that has an annual plan of work. Minnesota requires recipients to submit an annual budget application and plan of work documenting major changes/edits, including any program of study (POS) changes, to the two-year application. In the diagram below, you will see that the CLNA spans a two-year time frame with annual budget requests and updates on the second year. Your first CLNA is represented in the orange inserts; your second CLNA is represented with the green shading. 118,000 Minnesota employees take customized training or continuing education courses.

What is Meant by Comprehensive?

A successful needs assessment leads to actionable priorities and meaningful, long-term change. Achieving these results requires more than just one or two people completing a form behind closed doors. It requires active, meaningful engagement of concerned stakeholders in a process to examine, identify, and diagnose the challenges that need to be addressed for improvement to occur.

Four essential features make a needs assessment comprehensive:

1. Needs-Driven and Context-Specific Approach
2. Thorough Data Collection and Analysis
3. Stakeholder Engagement
4. Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs

**July 1, 2019**

Transition application received/approved

**May 1, 2020**

Two-year local application, including the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, submitted

**May 1, 2021**

Annual local budget and work plan updates submitted

**May 1, 2022**

Two-year local application, including new CLNA, submitted

**May 1, 2023**

Annual local budget and work plan updates submitted

## A Closer Look at the Essential Features

1. Needs-Driven and Context-Specific Approach

A successful needs assessment is both needs-driven and context-specific. To be needs-driven, the needs assessment design and scope should be built around an organizing framework that defines the problems, topics, and questions to be addressed. To be context-specific, the design and data inputs of the needs assessment must reflect the local characteristics of the consortium. Who are your partners? Who are your learners? What are the biggest needs in your community? What are your points of pride? Do you describe yourselves as rural, urban, an agriculture community, first-generation students, older than average students? What's your elevator speech when you explain the environment or context of your community?

## 2. Thorough Data Collection and Analysis

A successful needs assessment utilizes thorough data collection and analysis, including diverse and high-quality data that is both qualitative and quantitative and that reflects multiple viewpoints.

Data might include:

- Input data: Information related to improvement plans, curriculum materials and supplies, training, resource allocation, and intervention programs
- Output data: Information that illustrates outcomes or results and could include student and teacher retention and persistence, student achievement, program reviews, classroom observations, etc.
- Demographic or community context data: Important contextual factors that the consortium likely does not have the power to change but that may affect implementation of plans. Such information includes student subgroup populations and demographics, local economic trends, student mobility, and overall enrollment patterns

## 3. Stakeholder Engagement

A needs assessment is a process that should be undertaken by regional stakeholders, rather than completed entirely by a small group of leaders or an outside entity. Engaging school staff, parents, a diverse assortment of education, business, and community leaders, and external support providers (including students) during each phase of the needs assessment—not just in the delivery of results—ensures that the planning, data collection, identified needs, and consideration of underlying causes incorporate the input of a broad knowledge base, including diverse local perspectives.

Consultation with “a diverse body of stakeholders” is at the heart of ensuring a rigorous and meaningful needs assessment process. Some of the required stakeholders may not be as familiar with CTE programs as others. Nevertheless, their involvement is critical to identify program priorities as well as gaps and barriers to participation. In addition, the process allows stakeholder involvement from the beginning, leading to buy-in and support and giving a voice to those who feel they have none. Information (and the specific language from the law) on legislatively required engagement of various stakeholders is found in the Consortium Local Needs Assessment Planning Framework.

## 4. Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs

The primary outcome of a needs assessment is a set of needs, or prioritized areas of focus, that will inform the Consortium Perkins Application. Collaborative identification of those needs means that stakeholder ownership and understanding increases and fosters a team that is invested in moving forward together on solutions to address local challenges.

## The CLNA and Its Connection to the Local Application

The law's intended purpose for the comprehensive local needs assessment is to foster and support data-driven decision-making and more aligned planning, spending, and accountability under Perkins V. The results of the CLNA must form the foundation of the local application and drive spending decisions. There should be a clear connection between the strengths and challenges identified in the CLNA and the strategies and activities outlined in the local application.

## Five Elements of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

A thoughtfully implemented, data-driven needs assessment provides a powerful opportunity to engage stakeholders in a common understanding and vision for the future of CTE within a community. The CLNA requires applicants to evaluate, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, how the consortium's overall CTE offerings measure up in several areas.

### **Five Key Elements:**

- Element One: Student performance on federal accountability indicators
- Element Two: Program size, scope, quality, and alignment to labor market
- Element Three: Progress towards implementation of CTE programs of study
- Element Four: Improving recruitment, retention, and training of CTE professionals, including underrepresented groups
- Element Five: Progress toward implementation of equal access to and equity within CTE programs

The five key elements of the needs assessment outlined in the law can be divided into three main categories: student performance, labor market alignment, and program implementation. It is important to remember that no single area in the law is more important than any other. To meet federal requirements, your needs assessment must cover all the key elements well.

### **Local Application**

- Lay out eligible recipient's vision/theory of action for CTE
- Identify strategies, solutions, and investments to sustain and scale strengths in CTE systems/programs
- Identify strategies, solutions, and investments to address weaknesses and gaps in CTE systems/programs
- Supports innovation

### **Needs Assessment**

- Identify areas of strength in CTE systems/programs
- Identify areas of weakness and gaps in CTE systems/programs
- Informed/validated by stakeholders and partners
- Look for innovation

## A Caution About Data Interpretation

There are some common mistakes that people can make when conducting needs assessments, and it is important to be aware of these issues from the beginning.

### **Disregarding Issues**

This is usually not intentional, but it is easy to disregard issues that surface during needs assessments for several reasons. First, you might not feel the issue is important. Second, the issue might be controversial. Third, it could be an issue that you are not familiar with.

### **Allowing Undue Influence**

Certain people or groups can be very outspoken, but their contributions should be balanced with those of smaller or less outspoken groups so no single group has undue influence over the process. It is important to talk with a broad audience and not just focus on a few key stakeholders. By talking to several people throughout the consortium, you will get a more accurate reflection of what is going on in your consortium. Even more important than talking with a broad audience is listening to diverse perspectives. This serves two objectives: uncovering new problems and ideas specific to your CTE work and strengthening the relationship between your work and diverse stakeholders, bolstering legitimacy.

### **Focusing Too Narrowly or Too Broadly**

A common problem is focusing the needs assessment on only one topic, often in an area with which you have the most knowledge. However, it is important to look at other issues when conducting the assessment—even issues that might not be addressed by the Perkins Consortium. This will give you a better understanding of factors that might unintentionally impact your programs and the Consortium. It is also important to not look too broadly. For example, it is important to look at county-level statistics, not just at statewide or national data. For counties with large populations, it is helpful to look at specific communities. Countywide data can sometimes hide issues that affect different subpopulations within the county.

### **Relying Only on One or Two Data Sources**

A needs assessment has to consist of data collected using several methods. Only looking at secondary and postsecondary student data does not give enough information about what is going on in the regional workforce. All data gathering methods have limited value if they are performed in isolation. A good needs assessment starts with a plan, including the different methods that will be used to gather data.

## **PART TWO: CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The following sections of this guide will translate language in Perkins V related to the local needs assessment into meaningful action steps: Prepare, Explore, Assess, Prioritize,

Communicate, and Evaluate. This section of the guide also offers suggestions on materials and data to review, stakeholders to consult, and questions to ask to further your analysis. The steps are applied to an assessment of the five key elements of the Minnesota needs assessment (and as outlined in the law).

## Step One: Prepare

Actions and Decisions During Step One:

- Determine the makeup of the consortium's CLNA team
- Identify resources needed to complete the work
- Develop a timeline for completion of the CLNA
- Identify stakeholders

A successful needs assessment leads to actionable priorities and meaningful, long-term change. Achieving these results requires more than just one or two people completing a form behind closed doors. It requires active, meaningful engagement of concerned stakeholders in a process to examine, identify, and diagnose the challenges that need to be addressed for improvement to occur. Keep in mind that the CLNA can be regional in nature, combining efforts of more than one consortium. This may prevent duplication of effort and impact the makeup of your CLNA team and what stakeholders are consulted.

### Determine the Makeup of the CLNA Team

Begin by performing a self-assessment of your current working team. Who are the key leaders? This will vary from consortium to consortium. In many cases, the initial work team will be your current governance team. You will need to intentionally seek out key decision makers, especially those representing groups affected by CTE programming but not often part of the decision-making process (parents and students battling poverty, students with disabilities, representatives of communities of color, and representatives of Indian tribes and tribal organizations) as your work progresses.

### Identify Resources Needed to Complete the Work

The CLNA was modeled after a similar requirement in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA). Before you begin the Perkins CLNA, contact the district/campus/community individuals involved in leading those other needs assessments. They may be able to help you pull data and stakeholders together. You can leverage many activities in which you are already engaged in order to build the needs assessment. The information collection and consultation activities do not have to be new or different from what you may already be doing. The data you collect, the relationships you have formed with industry and community partners, and the processes you engage in for curriculum development, revision, and program approval are all relevant foundation for the needs assessment.

## Develop a Timeline

The thorough CLNA process will take several months to complete, and it must precede the 2020–2021 application process. This will be repeated every two years. Your preparation to conduct a needs assessment will need to include the timeline for the work, the identification and engagement of CLNA team members and stakeholders, and the resources required for the process.

The Perkins V workflow reflects the full cycle of your Perkins work. As you develop your timeline, be aware of how the CLNA fits into the complete work cycle of Perkins requirements.

## Perkins V Workflow

The Perkins V process begins in the 2019–2020 transition year. During this time, a comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA) is completed at the local, regional, or consortium level. Results of this needs assessment are used to write the first two-year local application under the Perkins V law. Local applications from consortia are due for submission by May 1, 2020. Full implementation of Perkins V begins July 1, 2020, with the award of funds to local consortia. Since the local applications cover a two-year period, only a budget update and significant changes are due in alternate years, May 1, 2021 and 2023. The next CLNA will be conducted by consortia during fall of 2021 and possibly into spring 2022. Results of this second CLNA will be incorporated into the two-year application, due May 1, 2022. By October 1 each year, consortia are required to submit an Annual Performance Report. Reallocation of unused, prior-year funds is conducted in January of each year.

The state application covers a four-year period beginning in July 2020 and extending through June of 2024.

## Step Two: Explore

Actions and Decisions During Step Two:

- Identify existing data
- Determine additional data needs and select methods to collect it
- Determine if outside resources or consultation is needed to collect data
- Engage stakeholders

### Identify Existing Data

Data are a foundational component of any needs assessment process. However, data collected in their “raw” form are not always useful for making decisions. Often, they need to be organized in a way that is readable and useful for stakeholders who will be involved in interpreting the data and identifying needs. During this phase of the needs assessment, data are collected in various forms (qualitative, quantitative, input, output, demographic) from various sources. Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota State, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and consortium member records are common sources for needs assessment data. After identifying your stakeholders,



begin exploring what readily available and relevant data sources exist in the consortium. Involve stakeholders in identifying data sources.

Sources to consider include the following:

- Assessment results, community demographics, student and teacher retention, and persistence data
- Data from classrooms/programs
- Surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups that gather perceptions from diverse groups, such as parents, educators, students, and community members
- Relevant district and school policies, plans, and allocation of resources

It is likely that data sources you identify will not allow your consortium to speak to all aspects required in the CLNA.

Determine Additional Data Needs and Select Methods to Collect It

Your consortium may need to collect some of their own data as well. Your stakeholder team could think about gathering data on two kinds of needs: 1) needs people suspect/know about/will talk about, or 2) needs that tend to be less obvious or harder to talk about.

Gathering information about both of these needs require different techniques. Your needs assessment may benefit from data gathered using some of the following techniques:

- Environmental scanning (formally gathering information about what others are doing, what is happening in the region, etc.)
- Document reviews (reviewing documents, reports, and data from existing sources)
- Focus groups/interviews
- Surveys
- Observation
- Nominal group technique/appreciative inquiry/concept mapping

The goal for additional data collection is to gain important perspectives and firsthand knowledge of a situation your consortium needs to better understand. Identify key informants who can offer insight, then determine the data-gathering technique you will use to collect their perspectives. For instance, consider that your consortium wants to understand retention issues of a specific subgroup of students. Begin by seeking the opinions of those key informants: students in that subgroup, student services personnel, faculty, and community stakeholders who are members of that population subgroup. Key informants are often very helpful to add additional information and tend to be knowledgeable about unique needs or subgroups. They can help you understand why something is happening or understand the history of community attributes.

While the needs assessment process is the same for all applicants, the resources, stakeholders, and level of analysis may look different in each consortium. Where it makes sense to do so, consider taking a regional approach to the needs assessment. This broadens the scope of the CLNA beyond your consortium boundaries which may provide more meaningful results.

Regional needs assessments may lead to efficiencies in consultation with stakeholders, data gathering, and assessment of results.

## Step Three: Assess

Actions and Decisions During Step Three:

- Meet with stakeholders to review and discuss data
- Use the questions offered in this guide to shape discussion and analysis
- Consider if outside resources or consultation is needed to analyze or interpret data

While the needs assessment process may seem daunting at first, it is important to keep in mind that you can leverage this process to work within your consortium. Ultimately, the local needs assessment process is about helping you make a more formal shift from merely collecting information and data to using systematic ways to collect and examine information to ensure your local CTE programs help create success for students and employers. The Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment Reporting Framework provides the structure for you to gather and analyze your data, record strategies, and identify partners. It will be submitted on a biennial cycle with your Perkins application of the consortium.

The activities of this step of the CLNA will likely be the biggest shift under Perkins V and should become a regular part of your overall consortium's data-driven decision-making and program improvement cycles—not merely an additional activity every two years.

The law's emphasis on stakeholder engagement means engagement in data collection and analysis. When preparing and organizing data to present, consider all stakeholders who will have a role in interpreting information and prioritizing needs, as well as the processes that will be used to complete these later steps. It is important to ensure that data presentation is clear and accessible for the intended audience.

Guidance to Assess Element One: Student Performance

### **Materials to Review**

- Perkins performance data for the past several years, aggregated and disaggregated by CTE program and subpopulation groups
- Stakeholders to Consult
- All stakeholders required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, and representatives of special populations
- Data staff

### **Questions to Ask**

- How are students in my CTE programs performing on federal accountability indicators in comparison to non-CTE students?
- How are students from special populations performing in my CTE programs in comparison to students without identified special needs?

- How are students from different genders, races, and ethnicities performing in my CTE programs?
- Which groups of students are struggling the most in CTE programs?
- Where do the biggest gaps in performance exist between subgroups of students?
- Which CTE programs overall have the highest outcomes, and which have the lowest?
- Are there certain CTE programs where special populations are performing above average? Below average?
- What are the potential root causes of inequities in my CTE programs?

## Guidance to Assess Element Two: Size, Scope, Quality, and Alignment to Labor Market

### **Materials to Review**

#### *Size:*

- Total number of program areas, number of courses within each program area
- Total number of students who could be served by the eligible recipient, aggregate and disaggregated CTE course enrollments, and CTE participant and concentrator enrollments for the past several years, aggregate and disaggregated
- Number of students applying to your programs, if applicable
- Number of students on waiting lists, if applicable
- Survey results assessing student interest in particular CTE programs

#### *Scope:*

- Documentation of course sequence and aligned curriculum
- Credit transfer agreements
- Data on student retention and transition to postsecondary education within a program of study (POS)
- Descriptions of dual/concurrent enrollment programs, and data on student participation
- Data on student attainment of credentials and articulated credit
- Curriculum standards that show depth and breadth of programs
- Opportunities for extended learning within and across POS

#### *Quality:*

- A wide variety of materials can inform this: the materials listed throughout this document, curriculum standards and frameworks, lesson plans, assessments, partnership communications and engagement activities, safety requirements, work-based learning procedures, Career and Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSO) activities and alignment, data collection mechanisms, and program improvement processes

#### *Labor Market:*

- Results of any available gap analysis on educational outcomes and employment
- Needs (from the state or separately commissioned)
- State- and local-defined lists of in-demand industry sectors and/or occupations
- State and local LMI

- Real-time job postings data from online search engines, possibly with analytics
- Support from a data firm

## Digging In to Understand Equity and Access

After examining data to identify significant differences in performance between subpopulations and across programs, the next step is to consider the root causes of these inequities so that you can later identify corresponding practices that can combat inequity in your CTE programs.

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) resources can support this process.

The following resources, data dashboards, and other tools can be found here:

***[napequity.org/public-policy/frontline-legislation/strengthening-career-and-technical-education-for-the-21st-century-act/](https://napequity.org/public-policy/frontline-legislation/strengthening-career-and-technical-education-for-the-21st-century-act/)***

### The Equity Gap Analysis

- **The Equity Gap Analysis:** Local tool provides more information on conducting an equity gap analysis to assist in meeting the provisions of Perkins V for supporting special population learners.

### The NAPE Nontraditional Career Preparation

- **The NAPE Nontraditional Career Preparation: Root Causes and Strategies** tool summarizes the research into root causes of inequality and the strategies for addressing these root causes, in relation to nontraditional career pathways. ***See more here:*** ***[napequity.org/root](https://napequity.org/root)***

### The PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities

- **The PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities:** Root Causes and Strategies Tables offer a simplified review of root causes or barriers that students with disabilities face to accessing high-quality education, including career and technical education experiences. See more here: ***[napequity.org/nape-content/uploads/NAPE\\_Students\\_wDisabilities\\_RootCauses\\_Table\\_2019-04-04\\_cac.pdf](https://napequity.org/nape-content/uploads/NAPE_Students_wDisabilities_RootCauses_Table_2019-04-04_cac.pdf)***

## Guidance to Assess Element Two:

Size, Scope, Quality, and Alignment to Labor Market (continued)

### **Stakeholders to Consult: Size, Scope, and Quality**

- All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, representatives of special populations, and parents and students
- Data staff

### **Stakeholders to Consult: Labor Market Alignment**

- All participants required by law, particularly secondary and postsecondary administrators, career guidance and advisement professionals, business and community partners, local workforce investment/economic development boards, and representatives of special populations

## Guidance to Assess Element Three:

Programs of Study (POS) Implementation Progress

### Materials to Review

- Documentation of course sequences and aligned curriculum
- Curriculum standards for academic, technical, and employability skills
- Credit transfer agreements
- Data on student retention and transition to postsecondary education within the program of study
- Descriptions of dual/concurrent enrollment programs and data on student participation
- Data on student attainment of credentials and articulated credit
- State-recognized POS rubric

### Stakeholders to Consult

- All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, and career guidance and advisement professionals
- Representatives of special populations, including people battling poverty, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people of color, and representatives of indian tribes and tribal organizations

### Questions to Ask

- How fully are my programs aligned and articulated across secondary and postsecondary education?
- Do my programs incorporate relevant academic, technical, and employability skills at every learner level?
- Do I have credit transfer agreements in place to help students earn and articulate credit?
- Are my students being retained in the same program of study?
- Do students in the programs of study have multiple entry and exit points?
- Are students in my programs earning recognized postsecondary credentials?  
Which ones?
- Are secondary students in my programs earning dual/concurrent enrollment credit?

## Labor Market Information at Your Fingertips

There are many easy-to-use online tools that can serve as secondary data sources and conversation starters about labor market information. These include:

## Career Outlook in the U.S.

- Career Outlook in the U.S. displays recent and projected employment and current wages by state and occupation. Learn more: [\*\*careeroutlook.us\*\*](https://www.careeroutlook.us)

## Data USA

- **Data USA** can be filtered by city or county and includes recent industry occupation and wage data and real-time local job postings from online search engines. Learn more: [\*\*datausa.io\*\*](https://datausa.io)

## Current Employment Statistics

- **Current Employment Statistics** shows employment and typical wages by occupation and region in Minnesota. This information can help employers benchmark wages and can help job seekers and students explore careers. Learn more: [\*\*mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/current-employment-statistics/\*\*](https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/current-employment-statistics/)

## Occupational Employment Statistics

- **Occupational Employment Statistics** shows employment and typical wages by occupation and region in Minnesota. This information can help employers benchmark wages and can help job seekers and students explore careers. Learn more: [\*\*mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oes\*\*](https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oes)

## Occupations in Demand

- **Occupations in Demand** allows you to find out what jobs are in high demand in each region of the state. The typical wage, long-term employment outlook, training (or degree) required, and schools that offer training programs for each occupation are also listed. Learn more: [\*\*mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oid/\*\*](https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/oid/)

## Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal

- **Education Data System (SLEDS)** Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) matches student data from pre-kindergarten through completion of postsecondary education and into the workforce. Learn more: [\*\*mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/sleds\*\*](https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/sleds)

## Guidance to Assess Element Four:

### Recruitment, Retention, and Training of CTE Educators

#### Materials to Review

- State and/or local policies on educator certification and licensing
- Data on faculty, staff, administrator, and counselor preparation; credentials; salaries and benefits; and demographics
- Description of recruitment and retention processes
- Descriptions of professional development, mentoring, and externship opportunities
- Data on educator participation in professional development, mentoring, and externship
- Findings from surveys/focus groups of educators' needs and preferences
- Data on educator and staff retention
- Information about teacher/faculty shortage areas and projections of future staffing needs

### **Stakeholders to Consult**

- All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, and representatives of special populations

### **Questions to Ask**

- How diverse is staff at consortium schools? Does it reflect the demographic makeup of the student body?
- What processes are in place to recruit and induct new educators and staff? Are these processes efficient and effective, especially for educators coming from industry?
- Are all the educators teaching CTE programs adequately credentialed?
- Does the consortium offer regular, substantive, relevant professional development opportunities?
- What professional development offerings are most highly rated by participating staff?
- What do educators report as needs and preferences for professional development, benefits, and supports?
- In what subject areas does the consortium need to develop or recruit more educators?
  
- Guidance to Assess Element Five: Progress Toward Improving Equity and Access

### **Materials to Review**

- Promotional materials
- Recruitment activities for special populations
- Career guidance activities for special populations
- Processes for providing accommodations, modifications, and supportive services for special populations
- Information on accelerated credit and credentials available for special populations
- Procedures for work-based learning for special populations
- Data on participation and performance for students from special populations
- Findings from the root causes and strategies analysis from the student performance component
- Findings from surveys/focus groups with students, parents (if applicable), and community organizations that represent special populations

### **Stakeholders to Consult**

- All participants required by law, particularly administrators, secondary teachers, postsecondary faculty, career guidance and advisement professionals, representatives of special populations, and parents and students

### **Questions to Ask**

- Which population groups are underrepresented in consortium CTE programs overall and in particular program areas? Overrepresented?

- Are there additional enrollment discrepancies related to high-wage, high-skill occupations?
- What barriers currently exist that prevent special population groups from accessing consortium programs?
- How are special population groups performing in consortium programs?
- What accommodations, modifications, and supportive services do consortium member institutions currently provide to ensure the success of special population groups? Which ones are most effective? Which ones are underutilized?
- What additional accommodations, modifications, and supportive services would help ensure access and equity for all students within consortium programs?

## Step Four: Prioritize

Actions and Decisions During Step Four:

- Review your given priorities: local, regional, state, federal
- Use the context of the four-year timeframe to balance short-term/long-term needs
- Consider outside neutral facilitation for the prioritization

Using Findings to Drive Local Applications: Setting Priorities Based on Findings

To conclude your needs assessment process, you will have to merge the separate analyses on the five key elements into one set of findings and engage stakeholders in setting a future vision for addressing these needs, including deciding which programs and activities to prioritize for funding in your Perkins V local application. This prioritization should take into account the six required uses of funds for local recipients in Perkins V, including the many options listed within those required uses. In addition, Minnesota requires submission of a completed CLNA Framework for presenting needs assessment findings as part of the local application process. Utilize the Strategies/Action Steps workspace in the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment Reporting Framework to provide the structure for documenting your actions and decisions.

The answers to the questions your consortium asked during each stage of the needs assessment process should help you identify the most pressing needs of your local CTE system, including the needs of both students and local employers. The local application offers an opportunity for you to determine how best to address those needs through Perkins, and more broadly, how to shape your consortium's CTE program offerings and supports over the next four years.

You will likely have to make tough decisions about which needs to prioritize and which solutions will best meet identified needs, bearing in mind the full spectrum of information you uncovered, current research on evidence-based practices, and the context of your consortium. Perkins funding must be spent on activities that meet needs identified in the needs assessment, but there is no expectation that you will be able to meet all the identified needs within a four-year period, and certainly not within your initial budget year. In prioritizing areas of focus, think



about the program areas that need the greatest attention, areas where alternative funding sources are not available, or areas that will have the greatest impact on student achievement.

### Guidance to Set Priorities for Your Local Application

Here are a few overarching questions you may want to consider when setting priorities for your local plan:

- Which performance indicators are you struggling with the most? Which evidence-based strategies can help you address those needs?
- Are there immediate employer needs in your community that you can help meet? What about longer-term needs toward which you can start building a pipeline?
- Which elements of consortium programs are the strongest? The weakest? Which of the weaker elements could the consortium address to have the largest impact on student performance?
- How can you offer more students the opportunity to reap the full benefits of programs of study, including aligned pathways and recognized postsecondary credentials?
- Which professional development needs are most pressing? Which strategies will the consortium use to support educators over the next four years to ensure your programmatic and performance goals can be met?
- Which specific subpopulations are struggling the most in your programs? Are there root causes of these challenges that can be addressed immediately? Which ones need a more comprehensive long-term plan?

The CLNA is the driving force behind your work plan, your resource utilization, your budget, and the priorities of all your general work and compliance requirements.

## Step Five: Communicate

Actions and Decisions During Step Five:

- Designate a key communicator
- Determine how and when you will provide updates to stakeholders
- Provide a process for listening to input and determine how you will respond

### Communicate Priorities

Now that you have identified your programs and activities with the most pressing needs, it's essential to convey those priorities to your stakeholder groups. This ensures stakeholders know the results of the CLNA and meet ongoing consultation requirements in the law. Perkins V law specifically states that eligible recipients (consortia) of funds shall consult with stakeholders on an ongoing basis as determined by the agency (consortium). This may include consultation in order to:

- Provide input on annual updates to the CLNA
- Ensure programs of study are:
  - o Responsive to community employment needs
  - o Aligned with employment priorities

- o Informed by labor market information
- o Designed to meet labor market projections
- o Allow employer input
- Identify and encourage opportunities for work-based learning
- Ensure funding is used in a coordinated manner with other local resources
- Communicate results of the needs assessment to leadership and other stakeholders at all levels. Understanding of and support for these priorities is essential to successful implementation.

#### **Who Needs to Know the CLNA Results?**

- Leadership at the school, district, and postsecondary levels
- Stakeholder groups involved in the CLNA work

#### **What Do They Need to Know?**

- Priorities identified in the CLNA
- The relationship between the CLNA and local Perkins V two-year application and ongoing progress on consortium activities

#### **Why Do They Need to Know This?**

- In accordance with Perkins V law, development of the application and use of grant funds is based entirely on CLNA results

Remember that the CLNA is a cyclical process; the law requires a needs assessment every two years. Think about how you will continue the conversation during the interim to ensure that a continuous feedback loop exists regarding these priorities. Keep the communication flowing among all stakeholders so that they are continually engaged in the process; this will make your next CLNA much easier to initiate and accomplish. Keep partners in this process motivated and engaged by recognizing their contributions and providing periodic updates and feedback on progress. Consider establishing regular communication through a blog, webpage, listserv, e-newsletter, or some other tool.

Links to guides and toolkits with sample documents and best practices for engaging community partners can be found in ACTE's High-quality tools online library, Business and Community Partnerships section.

## **Step Six: Evaluate**

Actions and Decisions During Step Six:

- Determine who will lead the evaluation
- Define the process, frequency, and documentation required
- Identify actions that will occur as a result of the evaluation
- Ensure the evaluation is consistent and ongoing as required by Perkins V

## Evaluate Your CLNA Process

The process is not complete until you conduct an evaluation. Take the necessary steps to complete a thorough self-assessment of the CLNA process that was used. Be sure to request feedback from your work team and process stakeholders and document results of your evaluation. Remember: now is the time to begin preparing for the next comprehensive local needs assessment!

### Key Questions to Consider:

- What went well in your CLNA process?
- What could have been done differently to achieve better results?
- What was the level of support of the work team members/stakeholders?
- What individuals or groups could have participated as stakeholders, but did not?
  - Why didn't they participate? What future steps will you take to engage them?
- What were the challenges faced during the needs assessment?
  - What can be done to mitigate these challenges during the next CLNA?
- What resources were not available? Why?
- What resistance did you experience during the process?
- What feedback, both positive and constructive, did you receive from those who were involved in the CLNA, including stakeholders and work team members?
- On what established schedule will your team continue to meet and work together?
- How will you demonstrate collective commitment to ongoing engagement?

## PART THREE: GRATITUDE

Be sure to thank those who supported the needs assessment. Follow up with these individuals/groups to obtain their feedback on the CLNA process. Document feedback received and develop a strategy and action plan to address issues or areas for improvement. Extending thanks is powerful but transitory. Showing appreciation happens over time, which means staying in touch is important. Consider setting up an alert on the individual's name, company name, or topics of interest. Then, you can periodically reconnect with something to offer congratulations, information about new programs, new competitors, industry trends, etc. This turns a generic "thinking of you" into a much more meaningful "I immediately thought of you when I saw this." These efforts build the relationships necessary to continuously improve our work.

For a listing of all consortia leaders or Career and Technical Education staff, visit us at:  
***MinnState.edu/System/CTE/directories***

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