

## REALIZING INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY IN WIOA

# Aligned by Design: WIOA and Career and Technical Education

The enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which goes into effect on July 1, 2015, provides new opportunities for the workforce system and Career and Technical Education (CTE) to work together. Whether a state creates a “Combined Plan” that includes WIOA and the State Plan for Perkins, or a state writes a “Unified Plan,”<sup>1</sup> the state should consider how these programs can best work together to prepare individuals for careers that meet employer skill needs. This paper outlines some key areas where alignment can occur.

### PLANNING

The CTE community can participate in the development of a state plan that describes the state’s vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, and includes CTE’s role in achieving those goals. CTE can also participate in the development of regional plans. CTE stakeholders should include the state’s Perkins agency, administrators of secondary and postsecondary CTE, and local representatives of secondary and postsecondary CTE.

### LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

WIOA requires state and local workforce development boards to provide a rich array of labor market information about workforce and skill needs. CTE can take advantage of this data to inform the state Perkins plan as well as local program development and support career counseling activities for students.

### CAREER PATHWAYS

WIOA requires states and local areas to develop career pathways – a combination of education, training, career counseling, and support services that align with the skill needs of industries. Career pathways enable an individual to attain a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent and a postsecondary credential. WIOA requires local workforce boards

to partner with secondary and postsecondary CTE to develop and implement career pathways. By working together, local boards and CTE can provide complementary services; for example, WIOA can help provide wrap-around support services for low-income postsecondary CTE students.

### INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Career Pathways include education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation and training for an occupation. Under WIOA Title II, adult education providers must offer integrated education and training either alone or in partnership with other programs. Postsecondary CTE is a critical partner for the successful, widespread implementation of integrated education and training. These new provisions will make it easier for postsecondary institutions to replicate and spread integrated program models supported by multiple funding streams.

### EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Local workforce boards must engage employers to ensure that workforce investment activities meet the needs of businesses and to facilitate effective employer utilization of the local workforce development system. WIOA emphasizes the creation and use of industry-led sector partnerships to serve these and

<sup>1</sup> Under WIOA states may either develop a “Combined Plan” that meets the planning requirements for WIOA’s core programs and at least one other federal program, or a “Unified Plan” that satisfies the federal planning requirements only for WIOA’s core programs.

other purposes. CTE also engages employers in order to ensure that CTE programs prepare students with skills demanded by employers. Workforce boards and CTE leaders can work together, including through the use of sector partnerships, to prevent duplication and efficiently engage employers in a systemic fashion.

### WORK-BASED LEARNING

WIOA emphasizes work-based learning as an effective education and training strategy, particularly for youth. The Title I youth program is required to spend at least 20 percent of its funding on work experience. CTE has long recognized the value of work-based learning, particularly through cooperative education. WIOA and CTE can work together with employers to arrange work-based learning opportunities especially for in-school youth.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND SHARED DATA

WIOA includes common performance measures for the six core programs in WIOA, and four of the measures also apply to training providers that want to serve students funded by WIOA Title I. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will develop a template for training provider reports that will provide performance and other valuable information for students and potential students. CTE, particularly postsecondary CTE, can take advantage of the common measures in order to provide consistent information to policymakers and the public about program performance. The Departments also propose to afford public education entities access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records to conduct matching with participant data, facilitating the use of UI wage records for reporting, research, and evaluation.

By working together in these and other ways, WIOA and CTE can create a more efficient and effective education and training system that improves education and employment outcomes for individuals and meets employer workforce needs.



**National Skills Coalition** is a broad-based coalition of employers, unions, education and training providers, and public officials working toward a vision of an America that grows its economy by investing in its people so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.



**The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)** is the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals, including educators, administrators, researchers, guidance counselors and others at all levels of education. ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development and leadership opportunities.



**The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc)** was established in 1920 to represent the state and territory heads of secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across the nation. NASDCTEc's vision is to support an innovative CTE system that prepares individuals to succeed in education and their careers and poises the United States to flourish in a global, dynamic economy through leadership, advocacy and partnerships.

Go to [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wioa-implementation](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wioa-implementation) to access resources that can support effective WIOA implementation.