

**Massachusetts Guide for Conducting a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment**

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The federal **Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act** requires that funding recipients undertake a **Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA)** at least every two years. This document serves as a guide to that process.

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# **Introduction**

The **Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act** (commonly known as Perkins V) recognizes, in a way that previous iterations of Perkins legislation did not, the value and importance of **in-depth, continual programmatic self-examination to improve programs and benefit students**. Consequently, Perkins V requires that recipients of Perkins funding undertake a **Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA)** at least every two years.

This document is designed to guide Massachusetts Perkins funding applicants through the development of needs assessments based on local considerations. Ultimately, the value of any needs assessment is a function of the effort behind it and the richness of the analysis conducted. We encourage and empower districts to undertake this to the depth warranted to identify improvement areas that can best serve students, with the knowledge that the findings of this analysis will be incorporated into the Perkins grant application.

# **Rationale, Expenditures, Stakeholder involvement**

**Rationale.** **Completion of a CLNA is required and ensures that local program decision-making is data-driven.** The needs assessment helps local leaders, in consultation and engagement with stakeholders, to analyze data to identify and understand the local context considering Perkins requirements. This leads to an opportunity to set a **vision** that addresses the needs over the next several years. Data-driven decision-making plays a key role in the success of the Commonwealth’s vocational programs.

**Expenditures.** The CLNA is both required and aids in planning Perkins expenditures. In completing the institution’s Perkins application each year, **you will be required to tie proposed Perkins expenditures to needs identified in your institution’s CLNA. All Perkins expenditures must align with identified needs.**

**Stakeholder involvement is required and crucial**. The CLNA provides a **structured way to engage** **key stakeholders** (including Program Advisory Committees) regularly about the quality and impact of local programs. Advisory Committees for career vocational technical education programs are essential. Such committees advise, assist, and support school and college personnel in order to enhance planning and operation of programs. Such advice is based on adequate and timely information regarding workforce and job development demands or job market trends, technological developments, and other factors affecting the quality of the programs. (For more on establishing Advisory Committees, see the [resources online](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/advisory.html).) **The Perkins application will ask about stakeholders involved in the local needs assessment.** Building effective committees and relationships requires planning and time.

Other key stakeholders may include parents, students, school staff, MassHire Boards, local and regional businesses and industries, school district administrators, postsecondary education leaders and institutions, school committees, and representatives from organizations representing out-of-school, homeless, and/or at-risk youth. This list is neither exhaustive nor required. Applicants should strive to involve the individuals and institutions that are most important locally.

**Timeline**. Since the Perkins V grant application references and reflects the results of an applicant’s CLNA, the CLNA must necessarily be completed prior to submission of a Perkins grant application. Perkins Grant applications may be submitted as soon as applicants have been provided with an allocation amount. The deadline for submissions is typically in late September. The actual deadline will be announced and posted annually on the DESE [Current Grants webpage](http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/grants.aspx?sortby=fundcode&direction=asc). Look for grants FC400 (Secondary) and FC401 (Postsecondary).

**Key points:**

* Program decision-making is data driven
* Perkins expenditures must align with identified needs, and must be tied to CLNA
* Stakeholder involvement is crucial, and acquiring input requires planning and time
* The CLNA Guide will be used to complete the Perkins V application

# **Building on Ongoing Improvement Efforts**

Many will find that completing a CLNA builds on ongoing improvement efforts already in place; for example: ESSA plans, district strategic plans, educational program plans, and others. It may also be that the assessment illuminates new areas, or areas that deserve renewed consideration and reflection.

# **What’s Next?**

Complete the CLNA using this Guide. Cover the required sections and, if it is helpful, capture notes in the [CLNA Worksheet](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/perkins-v/), consulting and engaging stakeholders as appropriate for each section. The methods by which applicants consult and engage with stakeholders are left to your discretion. By using this Guide you will cover, in order, the elements required by the [Perkins V law](https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/PerkinsV_September2018.pdf) (see REQUIREMENTS, p. 60).

Once you have completed Parts I-VI of the CLNA Components section, merge the analyses into one set of findings (see the last section, “Putting It All Together – the Findings”). Using these findings, engage stakeholders in creating a plan that prioritizes the use of Perkins funding.

While compiling components to complete your CLNA may not take long, **engaging stakeholders** in reviewing, discussing and prioritizing the components and making programmatic decisions will likely involve conversations over weeks or months. Establish a plan that includes engaging partners, examining ongoing improvement efforts, and delving into historical data with an eye toward understanding root causes and changes.

As you complete the assessment, questions may arise. Refer to DESE’s online [Perkins V Resources](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/perkins-v/) or contact your [liaison from the Office for College, Career, and Technical Education](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/liaisons.html).

# **CLNA Components**

## **Part I: Performance on Core Indicators**

### **How are our students performing? What improvements can we make to ensure we support all students?**

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) asks all applicants to collect, report, and analyze student outcome data to inform program improvements that benefit students.

In this section, applicants, using core indicators, determine overall progress in achieving targets, progress for subpopulations of students, and progress by specific CTE program.

#### Comparisons can include:

* + Members of special populations[[1]](#footnote-1) vs. non-member students or all students;
  + Comparisons by gender, race/ethnicity; and
  + Comparisons across the CTE programs offered.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

* + When looking at *all* students, for which indicator(s) does our school meet/exceed targets, and for which indicator(s) does our school not meet targets?
  + When looking at student population groups, for which indicators(s) does our school meet/exceed targets, and for which indicator(s) does our school not meet targets?
  + For each indicator, where are the biggest performance gaps (overall, by program, and by subpopulation)?
  + Which programs show the highest outcomes, overall and by subpopulation? Which show the lowest?
  + Thinking expansively and considering *all that is within our school’s control*, what potential root causes may explain differences in outcomes within and across programs? Which of the possible root causes are within our school’s collective ability to influence and change?
  + In what ways are these potential root causes similar across indicators, programs, and/or subpopulations? In what ways are potential root causes specific to indicators, programs, and/or subpopulations?

#### Resources

* [Guide: Using Performance Outcomes to Improve CVTE Programs for Students](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/)
* Perkins Core Indicator Reports [See [Guide: Using Performance Outcomes to Improve CVTE Programming for Students](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/) for details on using CVTE Reports, and DESE’s [Perkins V](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/perkins-v/) webpage for more on Perkins V Core Indicators.]
* [Planning for Success Root Cause Analysis](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/create-plan.html)

## **Part II: Alignment to Labor Market Needs**

### **How well are our programs aligned with state, regional, and local workforce and career needs? What programming changes might we consider for closer alignment?**

Perkins V emphasizes alignment between local and regional workforce needs and the CTE programs to meet those needs. School districts and postsecondary institutions are expected to make programmatic decisions grounded in an analysis of local and regional needs. Through analysis and regional consultation, applicants can determine whether programs should be expanded, added, or phased out.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

* + What industries and occupations are expected to grow most in our local region? [“Local region” is the area represented by a local MassHire Workforce Board, or two or more MassHire Board catchment areas.]
  + Regionally, to what extent is there a need for new or expanded CTE programming to meet existing industry/ occupational demand that our school might consider addressing?
  + Does our school offer CTE programs aligned with industries and/or occupations with weak or non-existent demand? What are those programs?
  + What are the emerging industries and/or occupations in the region, if any, to which all students should be exposed?
  + What skills and/or knowledge gaps, if any, exist in our programs, according to industry partners/experts?
  + Does our school offer (or intend to offer) programs meeting other needs *not* identifiedby our local MassHire Board? If yes, on what basis have we determined the need for the programs?

***Suggested Actions***

* + Engage Advisory boards and other stakeholders in this discussion.
  + Consider these six indicators for successful program development: projected job growth; living wage; student interest; emerging technologies; existence of a strategic industry partner; and the locations and extent of other training programs.

#### Resources

* Your Educational Program Plan, such as that submitted to the Mass. School Building Authority, will be useful in answering this section.
* [MassHire Workforce Board Regional Workforce Blueprints](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint) analyze workforce conditions for each of seven regions of the state and provide listings of priority and critical industries and occupations for each region.
* OCCTE’s [Pathway/Program Mapping Tool](http://massconnecting.org/pathwaymapping/) provides a visual and tabular listing of High Quality College and Career Pathways offered in public educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth.
* A sophisticated [Workforce Supply and Demand Data Tool](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/supply-and-demand-tool), developed by the Executive Office for Labor and Workforce Development, allows users to conduct research into a wide range of occupations. The linked website offers a single, clickable link to an Excel table that downloads to the desktop. Effective use of the tool requires a *large* viewing screen.

## **Part III: Scope, Size and Quality of Programs Offered**

### **Are our programs of sufficient size, scope and quality to meet all our students’ needs? How can we do better?**

Perkins V **requires** that programs offered by school districts and colleges be “sufficient in size, scope, and quality to meet the needs of all students served.” [134(c)(2)(B)(i).

For a clear explanation of the Perkins V program requirements for size, scope, and quality, see: [Size, Scope and Quality](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/perkins-v/) document.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

##### Size – Supply and Demand

* + How large do our programs need to be to meet student demand and provide equitable student access? What evidence do we use to make this decision?
  + Are each of our school’s programs large enough to provide all students with a rich learning environment? If we had additional capacity for seats, could we fill those seats? How do we know?
  + Are enough students enrolled in programs to make a substantive contribution to meeting local or regional labor market demand? How do we know?
  + Are any of our programs too large, given local or regional labor market demand? How do we know?
  + Do we offer programs with enrollments that are too small? Do we have excess capacity? Why are these programs small?
  + Could all students that are trained be employed? What data supports our conclusion?

##### Scope

* + How do course offerings in each program build competence sequentially from basic knowledge and skills to more complex understandings and abilities?
* How do course offerings in each program provide all students with sufficient opportunities to acquire technical skill proficiency aligned to All Aspects of Industry (AAOI)?
* How do course offerings in each program provide all students with sufficient opportunities to acquire general employability knowledge and skills?
* How do course offerings in each program provide all students with sufficient opportunities to acquire occupational safety and health knowledge and skills?
* How do course offerings in each program provide all students with sufficient opportunities to acquire management and entrepreneurship knowledge and skills?
  + How do course offerings in each program provide all students with sufficient opportunities to acquire computer knowledge and skills?
  + How do programs provide students with opportunities for career planning?
  + How do programs link secondary-level education with postsecondary-level education opportunities and pathways?

##### Quality

* Is the technical content of our programs sufficiently rigorous? How do we know?
* With which academic and technical standards does our curriculum align? Are these the right standards, given the needs of local business and industry?
* To what extent do our programs provide an organized educational structure that develops higher-order reasoning and problem-solving skills?
* How often do our programs systematically assess students’ technical knowledge and skills? To what extent do we offer feedback and provide students with ongoing opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills?
* How do we evaluate our programs? What measures do we use in our evaluations? Are these the right measures?

#### Resources

Two tools are available to help school districts and postsecondary institutions examine and address the many facets of program quality. The DESE [**Quality Assessment Tool**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/resources/)(QAT; also available in Google Forms format) and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) [**Quality CTE Program of Study Framework**](https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-tools/high-quality-cte-development/) guide users through an in-depth self-analysis process.

A sophisticated [Workforce Supply and Demand Data Tool](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/supply-and-demand-tool), developed by the Executive Office for Labor and Workforce Development, allows users to conduct research into a wide range of occupations. The linked website offers a single, clickable link to an Excel table that downloads to the desktop. To use the tool effectively requires a *large* viewing screen.

## **Part IV: Progress toward Implementing Programs and Programs of Study**

### **Have we developed pathways for all students to progress from secondary to postsecondary education?**

Perkins V draws a distinction between “programs,” that exist in a secondary or postsecondary setting, and “programs of study,” that bridge secondary and postsecondary education. Programs of study are career pathways that:

* Incorporate challenging state academic standards;
* Address both academic and technical knowledge and skills, including employability skills;
* Are aligned with the needs of industries statewide, regionally, and/or locally;
* Progress in specificity from consideration of all aspects of an industry or career cluster to more occupation-specific instruction;
* Have multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing; and
* Culminate in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

* + How fully are our institution’s programs aligned and articulated across secondary and postsecondary education? SECONDARY: Are students in each program we offer able to earn postsecondary technical credits? POSTSECONDARY: Do our Perkins-funded programs allow include courses available to high school students for college credit?
  + How do our institution’s programs incorporate relevant academic, technical and employability skills at every learner level?
  + How does your institution have credit transfer agreements in place to help students earn and articulate postsecondary credit at the secondary level?
  + Do students in the programs of study have multiple entry and exit points? Are the exit points aligned with in-demand entry-level occupations?
  + Do programs of study culminate for all students in the attainment of postsecondary credentials, certifications, and/or degrees? Are these credentials, certifications, and degrees aligned with in-demand entry-level occupations?
  + What does postsecondary outcome data suggest about the efficacy of secondary-postsecondary programs of study/pathways? About students’ employment prospects? About differential outcomes for specific subpopulations?

#### Resources

To engage in a more in-depth analysis of program staffing, see the DESE [**Quality Assessment Tool**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/resources/)(Program Design section) and/or the ACTE [**Quality CTE Program of Study Framework**](https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-tools/high-quality-cte-development/) (Standards-aligned and Integrated Curriculum and Sequencing and Articulation sections). Also, see:

* [Statewide Vocational Technical Education Articulation Agreements](https://www.masscc.org/articulation)
* [Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/frameworks/)

* [Edwin](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/) CVTE Graduate Pathways Summary, Postsecondary Pathways & Earnings Report [See [Guide: Using Performance Outcomes to Improve CVTE Programming for Students](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/) for details on using Edwin.]

## **Part V: Recruitment, Retention, and Training of Faculty and Staff**

### **How can we improve recruitment, retention, and training of our educational staff, including those in underrepresented groups?**

Perkins V places new emphasis on CTE Program staff. Specifically, the law **requires**, in Section 134(c)(2)(D), that each CLNA include –

A description of how the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of career and technical education teachers, faculty, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups underrepresented in such professions.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

* + To what extent does staffing at our school reflect the demographic makeup of the student body?
  + What processes are in place to recruit and induct new teachers and staff? Are these processes efficient and effective, especially for teachers coming from industry? How do these efforts attempt to address disparities between the demographic makeup of staff and students?
  + In what areas does our school need to develop and/or recruit more educators?
  + To what extent are all the educators teaching in our school’s programs adequately credentialed, including credentials, certifications, or other mechanisms to remain industry current?
  + To what extent does our school offer regular, substantive professional development opportunities? Do all staff members have equal opportunities to participate in appropriate professional development opportunities?
  + To what extent do our educators provide input on areas for professional development?
  + What do our school’s educators report as needs and preferences for professional development and supports?
  + What are the barriers to hiring qualified staff? (Consider how to address factors such as the full-employment economy, competition for salaries at living wage for the area, affordable childcare.)
  + When educators leave employment at our school, what is the process to determine their reasons for departure? Do we examine responses for patterns and possible interventions?

#### Resources

To engage in a more in-depth analysis of program staffing, see the DESE [**Quality Assessment Tool**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/resources/)(Personnel section) and/or the ACTE [**Quality CTE Program of Study Framework**](https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-tools/high-quality-cte-development/) (Prepared and Effective Program Staff section). Also, see:

* [Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr4.html?section=all)

* [Edwin](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/) Out of Field Report [See [Guide: Using Performance Outcomes to Improve CVTE Programming for Students](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/) for details on using Edwin.]

## **Part VI: Progress toward Improving Equity and Access**

### **Do we ensure that all students have both access and support to ensure participation in our CTE programs?**

Perkins V also places greater emphasis on issues of equity and access. Specifically, the new law **requires**, in Section 134(c)(2)(E), that each CLNA include –

A description of progress toward implementation of equal access to high-quality career and technical education courses and programs of study for all students, including— (i) strategies to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, the courses and programs for special populations; (ii) providing programs that are designed to enable special populations to meet the local levels of performance; and (iii) providing activities to prepare special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings that will lead to self-sufficiency.

#### Your institution’s analysis should attempt to answer the following questions:

* + Which population groups are underrepresented in our school’s CTE programs overall and by program? Which groups are overrepresented? (Demographics should be aligned to your entire district. Be sure to make comparisons to your entire catchment area, not just a subset of sending schools.)
  + Which groups are underrepresented in our programs that lead to high-wage and high-skill employment?
  + To what extent are there barriers that limit special population groups from accessing our school’s CTE programs, either in general, or by specific program?
  + To what extent do our school’s programs incorporate relevant academic, technical and employability skills at every learner level?
  + To what extent do we have accommodations, modifications, and supports in place to help ensure access and equity for all students within our programs? How could they be improved?
  + What groups are underrepresented in our career and technical student organizations, (*e.g.,* SkillsUSA, DECA, BPA, HOSA, FFA)?

#### Resources

* [Guide: Using Performance Outcomes to Improve CVTE Programs for Students](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/)
  + Enrollment Analysis section
* To engage in a more in-depth analysis of program equity, see the DESE [**Quality Assessment Tool**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/resources/)(Equitable Access and Support section) and the ACTE [**Quality CTE Program of Study Framework**](https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-tools/high-quality-cte-development/) (Access and Equity section).

# **Putting It All Together – the Findings**

We suggest using one or both of these [**CLNA Worksheets**](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/perkins-v/) to synthesize findings from Parts I-VI, prioritizing areas you need to understand more clearly. The Perkins Application calls for information on all strategic initiatives. The process is complicated, and this worksheet will help organize the collected information in preparation for the application.

Consider –

* Which items are most concerning?
* Which observations warrant further digging?
* What additional questions does your analysis raise?
* What are possible underlying causes?
* For each program analyzed, what are possible next steps, or what actions could you take based on the findings?
* Whom else might you invite to participate in this process, to help you better understand and synthesize needs and consider possible solutions?

*Do not forget that in* ***completing the institution’s Perkins application each year, you will be required to tie proposed Perkins expenditures to needs identified in your institution’s CLNA. All Perkins expenditures must align with identified needs.***

1. Special populations as defined by Perkins V are: (1) individuals with disabilities; (2) individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults; (3) individuals preparing for non-traditional fields; (4) single parents, including single pregnant women; (5) out-of-workforce individuals; (6) English learners ; (7) homeless individuals; (8) youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and (9) youth with a parent who is an active-duty member of the armed forces. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)