



## *Investing in America's Future:*

# A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education

**T**he strength of the American economy is inextricably linked to the strength of America's education system. Particularly in times of economic challenge, American employers need a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, creative, and equipped for success in the global marketplace. And our students need a more rigorous, better-tailored education to acquire the skills they need to compete, to follow a clear pathway into the middle class, and continue to prosper.

Transforming career and technical education (CTE) is essential to this process. CTE represents a critical investment in our future. It offers students opportunities for career awareness and preparation by providing them with the academic and technical knowledge and work-related skills necessary to be successful in postsecondary education, training, and employment.

Effective, high-quality CTE programs are aligned with college- and career-readiness standards as well as the needs of employers, industry, and labor. They provide students with a curriculum that combines integrated academic and technical content and strong employability skills. And they provide work-

based learning opportunities that enable students to connect what they are learning to real-life career scenarios and choices. The students participating in effective CTE programs graduate with industry certifications or licenses *and* postsecondary certificates or degrees that prepare them for in-demand careers within high-growth industry sectors.

At present, however, the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006* (*Perkins Act* or *Act*), which is a principle source of federal funding for secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs, is in need of reform and updating. The 2006 *Act* took modest yet important steps to improve the quality of CTE programs. But it did not go far enough to address the needs of youths and adults preparing to participate in the knowledge-based, global marketplace of the 21st century.

The Administration's proposal for a reauthorized *Perkins Act* would transform CTE and usher in a new era of rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE shaped by four core principles—alignment, collaboration, accountability, and innovation—and accompanying reforms as presented on the next page.

Transforming the Perkins program would add to key investments the Obama Administration already has made to align classroom teaching and learning with real-world business needs. These investments include \$2 billion in Trade Adjustment Assistant grants to strengthen community college programs and workforce partnerships. In addition, transforming the Perkins program aligns with proposed investments that include \$8 billion for the Community College to Career Fund aimed at training 2 million workers for high-growth industries, and \$1 billion to help 500,000 (a 50-percent increase) high school students participate in career academies.

## Four Core Principles for the Transformation of Career and Technical Education

Effective **ALIGNMENT** between CTE and labor market needs to equip students with 21st-century skills and prepare them for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors

- **Clear Expectations for High-quality Programming:** Provide states better guidance on establishing high-quality programs
- **A More Active Role for States:** Empower states to identify the in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors on which CTE programs should focus

Strong **COLLABORATION** among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners to improve the quality of CTE programs

- **Consortia Funding:** Establish consortia to ensure collaboration among secondary and postsecondary institutions
- **Private-sector Match:** Use a match contribution to strengthen the participation of employers, industry, and labor partners in program design and execution

Meaningful **ACCOUNTABILITY** for improving academic outcomes and building technical and employability skills in CTE programs, based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance

- **Within-state Competition to Distribute Funds to Consortia:** Provide states increased autonomy to select and fund high-quality programs responsive to regional labor-market needs
- **Common Definitions to Strengthen Data Systems and Close Equity Gaps for Participation:** Use uniform definitions for participation and performance indicators to create high-quality data systems that enable meaningful comparisons and identification of equity gaps
- **Incentives for High Performance:** Incentivize and reward local recipients that exceed performance targets

Increased emphasis on **INNOVATION** supported by systemic reform of state policies and practices to support CTE implementation of effective practices at the local level

- **State Conditions for Success and Innovation:** Ensure states have in place the policies and systems to support programs at the local level
- **A Competitive CTE Innovation and Transformation Fund:** Develop and implement new practices and models at the local level and support systemic reforms at the state level

The Obama Administration's FY 2013 budget proposes a \$1.1 billion investment to support the transformation of the Perkins program. For a copy of the Administration's proposal, *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*, please visit <http://www.ed.gov/ovae/>.