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# Career and Technical Student Organizations

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## **Career and Technical Student Organizations**

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) develop, in students, essential skills for success such as learning, thinking, communication, technology, and interpersonal skills. They help students gain a positive image through competitive skills events, leadership development, and service-learning projects. Students with exposure to CTSOs serve their communities, nation, and gain a competitive edge in the workforce.

### **Legislative Overview of CTSOs**

The concept of an organization designed to support students learning a vocation has its roots in the activities of such institutions as trade guilds and apprenticeship societies common in the 18th and 19th centuries. In more contemporary history, the development of career and technical education (formerly vocational education) and the career and technical student youth organization (formerly vocational student organization) can be chronicled through a number of relevant Federal laws back to its inception in 1917.

### **The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)**

The most recent iteration of the federal commitment to career and technical education (CTE) is known as Perkins V, which was signed into law in 2018. This bipartisan measure reauthorized the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) and continued Congress' commitment to providing annually for CTE programs for our nation's youth and adults. Similar to Perkins IV, states receive Basic State Grant funding that is then distributed to eligible recipients, including high schools, area career and technical schools, and community and technical colleges. Perkins V represents an important opportunity to expand opportunities for every student to explore, choose, and follow career and technical education programs of study and career pathways to earn credentials of value.

The purpose of Perkins V in South Carolina is to improve the academic and career and technical skills of secondary (6-12) and post-secondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. Funds made available under this Act are to supplement, but not supplant non-federal funds expended to carry out career and technical education activities.

### **CTSO Definition**

A career and technical student organization (CTSO) is a non-profit career-based group that offers co-curricular resources and opportunities for students in CTE pathways to develop knowledge and skills by participating in activities, events, and competitions. CTSOs embed communication and leadership skills into their programming.

CTSOs are not "clubs" to which only a few career and technical students belong. Rather, a CTSO is a powerful instructional tool that works best when integrated into the career and technical education curriculum by a qualified teacher who is committed to the development of the total person. Career and technical educators recognize the importance of providing

students with job- and career-related training that complements the job-specific skills needed for entry into a specific field.

### **Enhancing Program Quality through Career and Technical Student Organizations**

A CTSO is regarded as an integral part of career and technical education. CTSOs play an important part in preparing young people to become productive citizens and to assume roles of leadership in their communities. These organizations provide a unique program of career and leadership development, motivation, and recognition for secondary and post-secondary students enrolled, or previously enrolled, in career and technical education programs.

The CTSO is a powerful instructional tool that works best when it is integrated into the career and technical education curriculum by a trained professional. The dedicated instructor provides organized curriculum-oriented activities that help students gain career, leadership, and personal skills that maximize employability and the ability to become productive citizens in the workforce, home, and community.

### **CTSO Alignment**

Below are some examples of a few nationally recognized CTSOs and their alignment. This list is not a comprehensive list as the Perkins V legislation has opened the support for student career organization beyond the ones listed below. The educational programs and philosophies embraced by CTSOs are compatible with the challenging objectives of education in the 21st century. Thus, we encourage CTSOs in the improvement of career and technical education programs. The OCTE does not interpret Perkins V as limiting the use of State and local Perkins V funds to costs related to a fixed group of CTSOs. The OCTE would anticipate that the number and type of CTSOs may fluctuate as CTE programs change to meet ongoing economic and workforce demands.

- Business Professionals of America (BPA)
- DECA
- Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)
- National FFA Organization
- HOSA – Future Health Professionals
- SkillsUSA
- Technology Student Association (TSA)

### **Career Clusters**

CTSOs are an active part of the 14 Modernized National Career Clusters. The National Career Clusters® Framework serves as an organizing tool for Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, curriculum design and instruction. There are 14 Modernized Career Clusters in the National Career Clusters Framework, representing 72 Sub Clusters to help learners navigate their way to greater success in college and career. The framework also functions as a useful guide in developing programs of study bridging secondary and

postsecondary systems and for creating individual student plans of study for a complete range of career options. As such, it helps learners discover their interests and their passions and empowers them to choose the educational pathway that can lead to success in high school, college, and career.

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Construction
- Supply Chain and Transportation
- Arts, Entertainment and Design
- Hospitality, Events and Tourism
- Financial Services
- Education
- Healthcare and Human Services
- Public Service and Safety
- Agriculture
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Digital Technology
- Marketing and Sales
- Management and Entrepreneurship

### **General Information and Required Reporting**

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) provide students with the opportunity to learn more about and develop skills in their respective career areas as an integral part of the career and technical education program of instruction. Applicants awarded funds must satisfy periodic reporting and accountability requirements throughout the term of the grant listed on page 3. These requirements address: (1) program accountability; (2) performance reporting; (3) annual budget; (4) monitoring; (5) program evaluation; and (6) technical assistance.

As authorized, this grant program requires:

1. In their applications, organizations must
  - a. Explain how they will use grant funds in direct support of students to further industry-specific career and technical education programs;
  - b. Describe their program
  - c. Provide a history of their program, both nationally and within the state; and
  - d. Include estimates of future employment growth in their industry and the national scope of their program.
2. Grant recipients must submit, by January 30, a final, published report detailing.
  - a. How the grant increased industry/employer awareness,
  - b. The increased number of schools using the industry-based curriculum and partnered with the industry organization,
  - c. The increased number of students in the program

- d. An overview and analysis of the organization’s statewide student competition, and
- e. How the grant funds were spent in direct support of students.

### **Funding for CTSO under Perkins V**

One of the significant changes to the Perkins V legislation is regarding the Local Use of Funds (Sec. 135). The uses of funds are streamlined in the new legislation from Perkins IV. The funding now provides school districts to support the CTSOs vital to the programmatic needs of their community. Many of the current uses of funds are still covered, although some have fewer explicit clauses. There are also no longer discrete “required” and “permissive” uses of funds subsections, but instead, many of the former “permissive” uses are included as options under required activities.

In addition to the overall requirement that local funds be used to support CTE programs of sufficient size, scope, and quality to be effective, the law includes six new “required” activities:

- 1) Provide career exploration and career development activities through an organized, systematic framework;
- 2) Provide professional development for a wide variety of CTE professionals;
- 3) Provide within CTE the skills necessary to pursue high-skill, high-wage or in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
- 4) Support integration of academic skills into CTE programs;
- 5) Plan and carry out elements that support the implementation of CTE programs and programs of study and that result in increased student achievement; and
- 6) Develop and implement evaluations of the activities funded by Perkins.

Key activities such as purchasing equipment and supporting CTSOs, work-based learning, and dual and concurrent enrollment, among numerous others, are included under the elements that support implementation of programs and programs of study. Please be mindful of the 5 % percent limit on administrative costs. This stipulation is the same as previous legislation.

### **Funding Considerations**

The OCR is responsible for determining which costs and activities related to a CTSO may be supported with Perkins V funding in the same manner as any other costs that the State pays from Perkins V funds. Please note §34 CFR § 76.770. This responsibility includes determining whether the proposed costs related to a particular CTSO would be for career and technical education activities that are an integral part of the instructional program. In making this determination, we consider the limitations on the use of Perkins V funding for student transportation, lodging, and meals at a technical skills competition at a state- or national-level CTSO convention.

A cost related to a CTSO is subject to the requirement that the cost be for career and technical education activities are an integral part of the instructional program, as well as the same requirements as other costs paid with Perkins V funds, including requirements in Perkins V (such as supplanting), EDGAR, and the applicable cost principles.

### **Universal Identifier and System of Award Management—2 CFR Part 25**

All grant/subgrant applicants must obtain a unique entity identifier (UEI) by registering in the federal System for Award Management (SAM). The applicant must be registered in SAM prior to submitting their application, maintain their SAM registration throughout the application and award process, and include a valid UEI in the online application.

To register in SAM, you will need to create a Login.gov account (see Help). Registration can take time so begin your login.gov and SAM registrations well in advance of the application deadline. If you do not receive confirmation that your SAM registration is complete, please contact SAM.gov. For assistance, see the Federal Service Desk. [If sub granting USED funds, you may want to direct applicants to that agency’s USED’s SAM.gov tip sheet.]

Please note that applicant organizations must be registered in the SAM prior to submitting an application, maintain the SAM registration throughout the application and award process, and include a valid UEI in their application. The SCDE will not make a subaward of federal funds to an applicant until the applicant has complied with the requirements described in 2 CFR 25 to provide a valid UEI and maintain an active SAM registration with current information.

### **Suggested Use of Funds**

#### ***Professional development programs:***

Each CTSO, as part of its national and regional meeting program, provides professional development opportunities for teachers and advisors. To qualify as professional development, workshops and in-service training must be high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused; help improve student achievement; help CTSO Links to Federal Programs teachers stay current with the needs, expectations, and methods of industry; and help develop rigorous and challenging integrated curricula, among other requirements.

#### ***Support for CTE to improve academic and career and technical skills of students:***

CTSOs provide a venue for hands-on, contextual learning of classroom curriculum and help students see the “real world” value of what they study in their academic classes. Students have the opportunity in work settings to use career skills they have learned in the classroom.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration:***

CTSOs promote dialogue among relevant groups for the purpose of fostering partnerships and unified support for the career and technical education program. Stakeholder collaboration includes - local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, adult education providers, and other entities such as employers, labor organizations, intermediaries, and parents.

***Career guidance and school counseling programs:***

Each CTSO has programs that supplement and complement the curriculum of its specific discipline. Through their work with school counselors, CTSOs provide a valuable component to the career awareness and development process.

***Education and business partnerships:***

CTSOs help to provide students with opportunities to work with local businesses, in cooperative programs and through job shadowing.

***Strengthen academic and career and technical skills of students through integration of academic and career and technical programs:***

CTSO programs enhance both academic and career and technical education course work. Through hands-on, contextual learning experiences, classroom lessons become more relevant for students by providing a “real world” value.

***Provide programs that address all aspects of an industry:***

Through job shadowing and cooperative programs, students have the opportunity to learn about varied aspects of an industry.

***Involve parents, businesses, and labor organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating CTE programs:***

Parents of CTSO student members frequently get involved as chaperones, event judges, or sponsors of CTSO activities; also, through CTSO programs, students are exposed to business and labor leaders in their communities. A natural consequence of adult/student interaction through CTSOs is increased support for career and technical education.

***Provide career guidance and academic counseling:***

The mission of each CTSO includes career guidance for its members.

***Assist career and technical student organizations:***

Depending on the requirements within a specific state or local school district, it is possible that funds may be available to support CTSO activities, such as travel for chapter advisors and students, or the purchase of instructional materials.

### **Supplement, Not Supplant**

Federal funds must supplement, not supplant, existing services and may not supplant federal, state, local, or non-federal funds. Programs may not use grant funds to pay, in whole or in part, for existing levels of services funded from other sources.

- 1) The support of career and technical student organizations that are an integral part of the career and technical education instructional program, especially with respect to efforts to increase minority participation in those organizations.
  - a) The positions of State executive secretaries and State advisors for career and technical student organizations;
  - b) Leadership development workshops;
  - c) The development of curriculum for career and technical student organizations; and
  - d) Field or laboratory work incidental to vocational (career and technical) training so long as the activity is supervised by vocational (career and technical) education personnel who are qualified in the occupational area and is available to all students in the instructional program without regard to membership in any student organizations
- 2) The support of career and technical student organizations may not include:
  - a) Feeding, conveying, or furnishing transportation to conventions or other forms of social assemblage;
  - b) Purchase of supplies, jackets, and other effects for students' personal ownership;
  - c) Cost of non-instructional activities such as athletic, social, or recreational events;
  - d) Printing and disseminating non-instructional newsletters;
  - e) Purchase of awards for recognition of students, advisors, and other individuals; or Payment of membership dues.

### **Requirements for Reporting and Requesting Reimbursement**

The approval and the reimbursement of expenditures are contingent upon:

- 1) The activities being operated in accordance with the action plans;
- 2) The assurances provided via the application;
- 3) The rules and regulations per the U.S. Department of Education General Administrative Rules, EDGAR, and PL 109-270, Title I (Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act);
- 4) The submittal of a final report; and
- 5) The availability of federal funds

### **CTSO Final Reporting**

- 1) Summary of activities conducted and the impact on student achievement.

- 2) Year-end membership report that includes the list of schools with membership.
- 3) The year-end financial report
- 4) Copy of the CTSO's board minutes from the grant year.
- 5) List of the CTSO's board members and student state officers at the close of the grant year.

### **Elements to Build your Narrative**

- List the partnerships and/or sponsorships that have been formed over the past year to support the state student organization.
- Discuss strategies to recruit new members.
- Discuss the plan to promote the CTSO to all teachers, administrators, and partners.
- Attach samples of promotional materials e.g., brochures, Websites, flyers, posters, presentations, etc.
- Discuss the plan and implement effective leadership development workshops.
- Submit copies of conference programs.
- Attach a summary of conference evaluations.
- Develop and maintain electronic correspondence with all advisors.
- Establish continuous and open communication among all stakeholders, e.g., Web site, email, statewide forums, and evaluations or feedback for program improvement.
- Attach a list of advisor names and e-mail addresses.
- Attach brochures and state CTSO Web site printouts.
- Administrative Data

## Appendix A: SCDE CTSO Guidance

### State-Level Responsibilities Regarding Career and Technical Student Organizations

The SCDE recognizes the vital role CTSOs play in strengthening CTE programs and preparing students for college, career, and citizenship.

This guidance serves to clarify the role and responsibilities of state-level staff with respect to CTSOs and to address roles regarding governance, operations, funding, and accountability. Clear role definition is essential to ensuring program integrity, fiscal compliance, and consistent statewide implementation.

#### Guiding Principle

CTSOs are co-curricular instructional tools embedded within CTE programs of study. They are not extracurricular clubs, nor are they entities operated by the State.

The State's role is governance, oversight, and stewardship, not management or execution.

#### State-Level Responsibilities

##### 1. Governance, Policy Interpretation, and Compliance

State-level staff are responsible for:

- Interpreting federal and state policy (including Perkins V and EDGAR) as it applies to CTSOs
- Determining whether proposed CTSO-related expenditures are:
  - Instructionally aligned
  - Allowable under Perkins V
  - Supplementary (not supplanting state or local funds)
- Ensuring adherence to:
  - Federal guidance for [§2CFR Part 25](#) for Federal financial assistance applicants
  - Federal guidance for [§2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E](#) for cost principles
  - The 5% administrative cost cap
  - Applicable non-discrimination and accountability requirements

State staff do not authorize expenditures based on tradition or precedent; all decisions must align to statute and guidance.

##### 2. Fiscal Stewardship and Allowable Use of Funds

State-level staff ensure that public funds supporting CTSOs are used only for purposes that:

- Directly support students enrolled in CTE programs
- Are integral to instruction, leadership development, or career readiness
- Demonstrate a clear connection to CTE program quality

State staff must also enforce prohibitions, including—but not limited to—the use of funds for:

- Membership dues
- Student awards, jackets, or personal items
- Food, lodging, or transportation for conventions or social events
- Non-instructional or recreational activities

### 3. Monitoring, Reporting, and Accountability

State-level staff are responsible for establishing and enforcing reporting expectations, including:

- Review of CTSO funding applications and action plans
- Monitoring progress through required interim and final reports
- Reviewing:
  - Membership data
  - Financial documentation
  - Evidence of student impact
  - Governance records (e.g., board minutes, officer lists)

The State evaluates impact, alignment, and compliance—not event success or participation alone.

### 4. Program Alignment and Quality Assurance

State staff ensure that CTSOs:

- Align with approved Career Clusters and CTE programs of study
- Support career exploration, leadership, employability skills, and workforce readiness
- Evolve as workforce and economic needs change
- Complement—not replace—core instructional delivery

CTSOs are considered one component of a high-quality CTE system, not standalone programs.

### 5. Technical Assistance and Communication

State-level staff may provide:

- Guidance on compliance, reporting, and allowable uses of funds
- Clarification of roles and expectations
- Technical assistance related to policy interpretation and accountability

State staff do not manage CTSO operations, conferences, competitions, or internal governance.

## **What the State Does Not Do**

To ensure clarity, the following responsibilities do not reside at the state level:

- Operating or managing CTSOs

- Planning or hosting CTSO events or competitions
- Fundraising or membership recruitment
- Serving as CTSO officers or decision-makers
- Approving expenditures outside statutory authority

Operational control rests with local programs and CTSO organizations, consistent with state and federal requirements.

### **Shared Responsibility for Student Impact**

While governance roles differ, the State and the field share a common goal:

- To ensure CTSOs strengthen CTE program quality and deliver measurable benefits to students.
- Clear role alignment that allows the State to fulfill its fiduciary and accountability responsibilities while enabling local programs and CTSOs to lead instructionally rich, student-centered experiences.

### **Questions and Ongoing Communication**

Questions regarding CTSO policy, funding, or compliance should be directed through appropriate SCDE channels. Continued collaboration and transparent communication are essential to maintaining a strong statewide CTE system.