



ANTICIPATED FEDERAL WORKFORCE-EDUCATION CHANGES & K20 PROACTIVENESS

Godek, D., & Moore, M. (2025, October). Anticipated federal workforce-education changes & K20 proactiveness. District Administration, DA+.

THE PIVOT: WORKFORCE-FIRST SUCCESS MEASURES

Since early 2025, federal policy has pivoted toward a workforce-first model that re-centers Career and Technical Education (CTE), apprenticeships, and labor-market outcomes as the primary measures of success. A key inflection point came in mid-2025 when the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and U.S. Department of Education (ED) executed an interagency agreement transferring day-to-day administration of Perkins and WIOA Title II to the DOL. Federal officials framed the move as a way to streamline governance across the broader workforce system DOL already manages, but the practical effect for states, districts, and colleges is a rapid re-alignment of compliance calendars, performance indicators, data systems, and partner expectations toward employment, earnings, and credential attainment tied to regional demand (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). ([DOL](#))

“Compliance calendars and performance indicators realign around employment outcomes.”

THE TRANSFER: PERKINS + WIOA TITLE II ADMINISTRATION MOVES

Court actions in summer 2025 cleared lingering legal obstacles to the handoff and allowed ED to proceed with workforce-facing reductions in force while DOL operationalized the transfer. Advocacy and field reports anticipated that Perkins implementation, CLNAs, and Adult Education oversight would be re-interpreted through a labor-market lens, with greater emphasis on employer-led design, sector partnerships, and apprenticeship pathways ([Association for Career and Technical Education, 2025](#)).

Early 2025 Pivot

Mid 2025
Interagency
Agreement

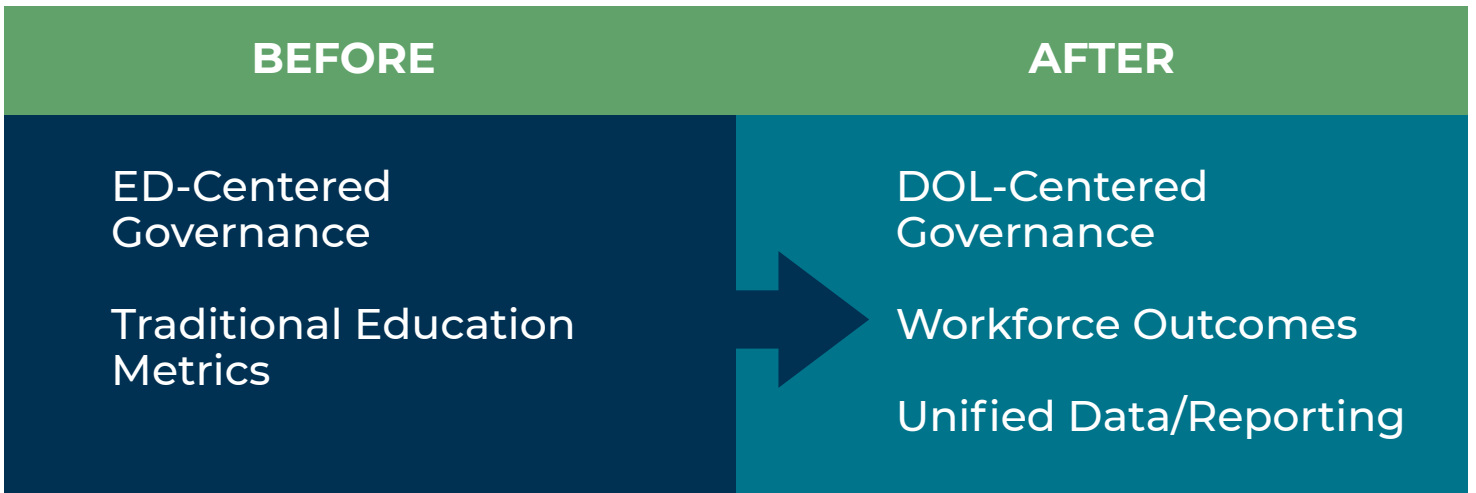
Summer 2025
Court actions
clear obstacles

FY26 Budget
proposal
reinforces
direction



BUDGET DIRECTION SIGNALS

Budget proposals for FY 2026 reinforced the policy direction. Independent analyses note the administration's plan to eliminate WIOA Title II Adult Education funding, while signaling an investment thesis that privileges CTE modernizations connected to Registered Apprenticeships and unified data/reporting under DOL systems. The Jobs for the Future (JFF) summary highlights both the adult-ed elimination and a national activities line intended to "unify" public workforce, CTE, and RA systems; skills advocates at National Skills Coalition caution that, while apprenticeships are prioritized, broader cuts and consolidations risk undermining on-ramps for adult learners who need foundational literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to benefit from training ([Jobs for the Future \(JFF\)](#), [National Skills Coalition](#), 2025)



IMPLICATIONS FOR K-12 + HIGHER ED

For K-12 and higher education, the implications are immediate: programs are being judged less on traditional academic outputs and more on placement, wage progression, and industry-recognized credentials aligned to regional labor demand. WIBs and employers have greater influence over program design and quality signals; data interoperability with DOL reporting (e.g., WIPS) becomes a core capacity; and CTE offerings lacking demonstrable demand face pressure to consolidate or retool. Strategic leaders who prepare for agency shifts, redesign programs to apprenticeship-aligned pathways, and formalize employer responsiveness will be best positioned to sustain funding and deliver economic value to learners ([District Administration](#), Godek & Moore, 2025).

Measures of Success

“For K-12 and higher education, the implications are immediate: programs are being judged less on traditional academic outputs and more on placement, wage progression, and industry-recognized credentials aligned to regional labor demand.”

Employer and WIB Influence:

“WIBs and employers have greater influence over program design and quality signals;”

Data Interoperability:

“data interoperability with DOL reporting (e.g., WIPS) becomes a core capacity;”

CTE Program Pressure:

“and CTE offerings lacking demonstrable demand face pressure to consolidate or retool.”

Leadership Positioning:

“Strategic leaders who prepare for agency shifts, redesign programs to apprenticeship-aligned pathways, and formalize employer responsiveness will be best positioned to sustain funding and deliver economic value to learners ([District Administration](#), Godek & Moore, 2025).”

Placement Rate:

“For K-12 and higher education, the implications are immediate: programs are being judged less on traditional academic outputs and more on placement, wage progression, and industry-recognized credentials aligned to regional labor demand.”

Median Earnings:

“The practical effect for states, districts, and colleges is a rapid re-alignment of compliance calendars, performance indicators, data systems, and partner expectations toward employment, earnings, and credential attainment tied to regional demand (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025).”

Credential Attainment:

“For K-12 and higher education, the implications are immediate: programs are being judged less on traditional academic outputs and more on placement, wage progression, and industry-recognized credentials aligned to regional labor demand.”

Measurable Skill Gains:

“Stand up an interim data mart that can feed both student information systems and DOL’s performance schema (e.g., WIPS fields for measurable skill gains, credential attainment, employment, and median earnings).”

RECOMENDATIONS

Use the Agency Shift Readiness Audit to stabilize governance and compliance. Map every affected program (Perkins, Adult Ed, related TA) against likely DOL counterparts, identify at-risk deliverables, and pre-plan handoffs to WIBs, sector partners, and DOL calendars. Establish a cross-functional transition cell to translate ED requirements into DOL expectations and to mitigate reporting risks as systems shift. This proactive, systems-first posture mirrors Godek's emphasis on executive problem-solving and change navigation at the cabinet level.

Deploy the Apprenticeship Pathways Designer to re-engineer programs of study. Rebuild CTE pathways around Registered Apprenticeship work-process schedules, stackable credentials, and dual-credit/on-ramp models from high school into community and technical colleges. Use CLNA logic to right-size programs to size, scope, and quality expectations while documenting employer demand, living-wage trajectories, and capacity constraints. Where adult-ed supports are at risk, braid resources with employer training and philanthropic funds to preserve foundational skills as prerequisites to RA success.

Assess Employer Responsiveness and act on gaps. Score WIB and employer responsiveness quarterly, set minimum thresholds for sponsorship, feedback loops, and data-sharing, and condition MOUs on timely performance information (attendance, hours, competencies, and placement). Use results to prioritize sectors with strong partner readiness, then publish an internal "green/yellow/red" heat map to guide seat allocation and pathway growth. This continuous-improvement stance reflects DA's guidance on aligning leadership attention with the highest-leverage problems (District Administration).

Upgrade data plumbing to DOL-aligned reporting

Stand up an interim data mart that can feed both student information systems and DOL's performance schema (e.g., WIPS fields for measurable skill gains, credential attainment, employment, and median earnings). Train staff on new definitions and submission schedules; pilot a joint dashboard with WIB partners to reconcile outcomes monthly. This is essential risk-management as oversight migrates and is consistent with the "measure what matters" orientation.

Protect access for adult learners while budgets are uncertain

If Title II elimination advances, identify bridge funding (governor's set-aside, philanthropy, employer tuition support) to sustain IELCE, digital literacy, and HSE on-ramps that feed RA participation. Document ROI in terms of retention and completion within apprenticeship cohorts to compete for innovation dollars. Skills advocates warn that removing foundational on-ramps widens equity gaps even as apprenticeship grows; leaders can counteract this by integrating foundational skills into paid work-based learning (National Skills Coalition, 2025)

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