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# State *Perkins* Accountability Congress

## Design Team Meeting 6

August 9–10, 2012

## Meeting Summary

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education (Department), Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), Division of Academic and Technical Education (DATE), convened the State *Perkins* Accountability Congress (SPAC) Design Team for a sixth meeting in Washington, DC, on August 9–10, 2012. The Design Team continued its discussions to refine definitions for secondary and postsecondary thresholds and develop potential measures of performance indicators. This summary includes a synthesis of discussions up to and including the August 2012 meeting of the Design Team.

### Overall Accountability Framework

The issues outlined below relate to the *Perkins* accountability framework. SPAC and Design Team members have raised these issues for Department consideration but will not attempt to resolve them.

1. Will the Department provide guidance regarding programs that can be approved for *Perkins* funding?
2. New criteria for state-approved programs may reduce the number of approved programs, which may in turn decrease the number of students included in accountability reporting. What are the potential effects of this reduction? For example, if it appeared that CTE participation declined significantly and suddenly?
3. Should the accountability framework address secondary students who drop out of high school prior to reaching the accountability threshold? Similarly, should the framework somehow consider postsecondary students who enter developmental education but leave postsecondary education prior to reaching the postsecondary education threshold?
4. Should the indicator definitions be associated with measuring consortium outcomes?
5. When should outcomes be assessed? Should this occur at both the secondary and postsecondary levels or upon completion of a full POS?
6. Should the indicators and measures reflect longitudinal aspects of students' educational experiences?

7. Should technical skill attainment be considered a secondary indicator within the accountability framework? The Design Team expressed interest in retaining technical skill attainment for secondary but not for postsecondary. Opinions differed as to whether the indicator should have a negotiated level for performance or be reported without a negotiated level of performance.
8. Will states be accountable for reporting accountability data only on federally funded, state-approved career preparation programs? Or will states be accountable for reporting accountability data for all CTE programs, including those not receiving federal funding support?
9. Will states be allowed to use surveys to assess enrollment in postsecondary education or training, employment, or enlistment in the military? States have raised the issue of survey use, and some Design Team and SPAC participants noted that they currently do not have the ability to conduct administrative record matching with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) or state postsecondary education systems. Members inquired whether the Department would accept the use of surveys to track enrollment in postsecondary education. Members also asked what, if any, standards for collection should be established, and if standards are established, what source would be used. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has developed standards for universe data collections that might be considered.

## Student Thresholds

Design Team members have expressed a strong preference for being held accountable for the outcomes of students who attain a minimum level of career and technical education (CTE) course work. Students who achieve a defined minimum threshold education would be eligible to be included when assessing performance results for the performance indicators, where appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

### Secondary Threshold

Design Team members have discussed the details of a secondary threshold at several meetings. The following section presents the points of agreement they have reached and lists additional issues that require further consideration.

*Secondary Threshold:*  
Students who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program by the end of the reporting year.

### Points of Agreement

The Design Team has come to agreement on the following points relating to the secondary threshold.

- **Percentage of program**— Participants favor standardizing measurement by basing the threshold on the percentage of a state-approved career preparation program that a student completes. Design Team participants agreed that the use of a percentage of program completed is consistent with the movement by states to define CTE program progress based on attainment of standards and competencies rather than completion of course work based

<sup>1</sup> The threshold serves as the starting point for the denominator for each indicator (additional parameters may be placed on the denominator). For example, the denominator for an indicator may include students who met the threshold and who did not reenroll in postsecondary education.

on seat time or clock hours. States vary in how they assess student participation in programs, with some basing decisions on the number of courses a student completes, some on the number of credits or Carnegie Units a student earns, and some on the volume of standards a student achieves.

- **Threshold**—The Design Team agreed that students who completed “at least 50 percent” of the state-approved career preparation program would achieve the threshold. Members discussed the possibility of changing the language to “more than 50 percent” due to concerns about students participating in programs of less than three sequenced courses. For example, a student enrolling in a two-course sequence would achieve the threshold level after taking just the first course in the sequence. Members decided to retain the criterion of students completing “at least 50 percent,” with the caveat that states be permitted to establish their own threshold level for career preparation programs of only two courses in a sequence. Members also considered using “completion of at least 50 percent with enrollment in the next course in the program sequence,” but determined that because data are not analyzed until the end of the reporting year this approach would not offer additional information.

Design Team members suggested that an analysis of state data to assess student participation levels along the continuum of course taking would also be useful to validate the threshold of “at least 50 percent.”

- **Technical content**—The Design Team agreed that only technical course work should apply toward calculating the CTE participation threshold. While academic course work might be considered an integral part of a CTE program or program of study (POS), this course work would not be considered for the threshold.
- **Timing**—The Design Team agreed that the reporting year should be aligned with the reporting year that each state defines for its *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* reporting requirements. Adopting this approach supports states in making meaningful comparisons between students who achieve threshold levels of CTE course taking and those participating in other types of educational programming.

Members also suggested that the timing of reporting for the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR) be aligned with the *ESEA* reporting schedule. Currently, states must report their data to the CAR by December 31 of each year, while *ESEA* data are submitted through *EDFacts* and are due by January 31 of the following year. Design Team members contended that because most of the secondary *Perkins* indicator results are reported through *EDFacts*, aligning the two submission timelines would be more efficient.

- **Defining career preparation programs**—Team members supported defining the secondary portion of a career preparation program as “the secondary component of a state-approved career and technical education program of study.” The secondary Design Team members recommended excluding CTE programs that do not meet the criteria for a POS.

## Issues for Consideration

The SPAC and Design Team raised several points that will require continued discussion by team members during future meetings.

- **Career preparation programs and high-demand career opportunities**—During the Design Team meeting, OVAE staff suggested using the phrasing “in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors” to clarify the intent of matching career preparation programs with high-demand career opportunities. This language allows educators to make connections between career preparation programs and their state’s identified high-growth industry sectors. Participants expressed concern with terminology that referenced “high-skill” careers because there may be subjectivity associated with the label. Members also noted that the use of the term “high wage” could cause difficulties, since the wages associated with an occupation are often a function of the supply of workers. Members expressed reservations with focusing solely on a subset of career areas, since doing so could drive down wages in targeted careers and drive up wages in those not addressed.

## Postsecondary Threshold

Design Team members have discussed the details of a secondary threshold at several meetings. The following section presents the points of agreement they have reached and lists additional issues that require further consideration.

### Points of Agreement

The Design Team has come to agreement on the following points relating to the postsecondary threshold.

*Postsecondary Threshold:* Students who earned at least 12 cumulative credits (or the equivalent) in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits (or the equivalent) by the end of the reporting year.

- **Cumulative credits**—Design Team members overwhelmingly agreed that a threshold of “at least 12 credits or equivalent” for programs of 12 or more credits is appropriate. The Design Team agreed that the use of equivalencies must be supported by written guidance, and members suggested using the Department’s recently developed reference guide regarding credit hours.<sup>2,3</sup> Members also agreed that for any program consisting of fewer than 12 credits or equivalent, a student must complete the entire sequence to be included in the threshold.

Design Team members requested that the explanation of the threshold include language that clarifies that “equivalent” includes clock hour programs and other types of programs that are not based on credits or credit hours.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (October 29, 2010). Program Integrity Issues. *Federal Register*, 75(209). Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-10-29/pdf/2010-26531.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (March 18, 2011). *Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations*. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>.

- **Maximum time to earn credits**—SPAC members agreed that there could be a specific number of years to look back for the 12 cumulative credits or equivalent. Members who advocated for a maximum number of years cited concerns about the viability of older credits toward current degree programs and a desire for standardization. Some members indicated that because data are analyzed locally, institutions may look at different timelines and it could be challenging to standardize their approaches. Other members preferred to use all the data available to them without a maximum number of years to look back, although they are willing to apply a year limit. The specific number of years to look back is still under consideration, and is noted below.
- **Inclusion of general education courses**—During the August meeting, Design Team members agreed to include only technical course work when assessing whether a student has accumulated the required number of credits to reach the threshold. Members noted that including general education credits could result in some students reaching the threshold without taking much or any CTE course work. The SPAC and Design Team considered this issue in several meetings, also acknowledging that CTE POS—other than very short-term programs—are designed to incorporate both CTE and general education courses. While the Design Team recommends that only technical courses be considered, members recognized that some states may not currently have the capacity to separate CTE and general education courses when assessing whether students have reached the threshold.
- **Developmental education**—Design Team members agreed that credits earned through development courses should be considered when assessing credits for the threshold.
- **Credit awarded in high school**—Design Team members identified several separate categories of students who may have earned credit while in high school, and determined that they should be included or excluded as shown below.

Include students who

- earned part or all of the required 12 cumulative credits (or equivalent) while in high school and who are enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the reporting year. Students may be enrolled in the same POS or another POS. College-level credits (or equivalent) earned while in high school—like those earned from other institutions—should be considered when assessing whether a student enrolled in postsecondary education has reached the threshold.

Do not include students who

- are in high school during the reporting year and who have earned part or all of the required cumulative 12 credits (or equivalent). These students are excluded so that they are not included in both secondary and postsecondary *Perkins* accountability reporting.
- earned part or all of the required 12 cumulative credits (or equivalent) while in high school and who are enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the reporting year but are not enrolled in CTE. The Design Team determined that, while

students should not be required to be in the same POS, they should be enrolled in CTE in the reporting year.

### Issues Being Explored

- **Number of years to earn credits**—Design Team members discussed the possibility of looking back for one to five years to identify cumulative credits. Representatives from Florida and Texas offered to analyze their data to see how many students meet the threshold in one year, and how many are added when looking back each additional year up to five years. The Design Team will discuss the results of the analysis to develop a recommendation for maximum number of years to earn credits.
- **Current enrollment**—During the August meeting, members tentatively decided that students should not have to be enrolled in CTE in the reporting year to be eligible. If a student has reached the threshold within the number of years allowed, then he or she should not be required to be in CTE in the current reporting year. If students continue in postsecondary without enrolling in CTE, they may eventually drop out of the threshold if their CTE credits are older than the maximum number of years states will look back for credits. The Design Team will use the results of the analysis of number of years to earn credits to finalize this discussion.

In earlier discussions, SPAC and Design Team members determined this issue also was tied to the question of whether general education courses are included. If general education/academic course work were considered as part of the threshold, then students should not have to be taking CTE course work in the current year to be eligible. This question was resolved when the Design Team determined that general education courses should not be included when assessing credits for the threshold.

### Indicators

The following section describes progress the SPAC and Design Team have made in developing suggested measures for four of the six performance indicators. The measure of each indicator is first presented visually through a flowchart of the elements that comprise the measure. A narrative of the measure follows each flowchart, and includes information about the agreements reached as of the writing of this report, as well as remaining issues that the Design Team and SPAC will consider. Narrative descriptions of the employment and earnings indicators are found at the end of the document.

## SECONDARY GRADUATION RATE

Measure: Percentage of accountably enrolled secondary students who graduated according to the state's computation of its graduation rate as described in Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(vi) of the *ESEA*

### Denominator

Students who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program by the end of the reporting year and were included in the state's computation of its *ESEA* graduation rate in the reporting year

#### Criterion D1

Accountably enrolled:  
Completed at least 50 percent of program by the end of the reporting year

#### Consideration D1

Completion may be based on technical sequence credits earned, standards achieved, or courses completed

#### Implication D1

States will need to develop and apply consistent approaches for identifying the components of a program among local providers and for determining what constitutes 50 percent of a program that has fewer than three courses in a sequence

#### Criterion D2

Enrolled in a state-approved career preparation program

#### Considerations D2

States must use consistent criteria to

- identify career preparation programs
- review/approve local applications

#### Implications D2

OVAE may wish to

- develop regulations for defining a career preparation program
- provide guidance for required components of funded programs

#### Criterion D3

Included in state computation of *ESEA* graduation rate

#### Considerations D3

- Assumes four-year cohort beginning with ninth grade
- States must
  - link to their *ESEA* definition/reporting for graduation
  - use *EDFacts* to access these data

#### Implications D3

- Not all students who reach the threshold level of participation will be included
- Graduation data for the measure will be comparable to those data reported for other students

### Numerator

Students who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program by the end of the reporting year, were included in the state's computation of its *ESEA* graduation rate in the reporting year, and received a standard high school diploma in the reporting year

#### Criterion N1

All denominator criteria

#### Criterion N2

Received a standard high school diploma in the reporting year

#### Consideration N2

States must limit reporting to accountably enrolled students who received a standard high school diploma

#### Implication N2

Students earning a GED, a certificate of completion, or who graduate in more than four years would not be counted

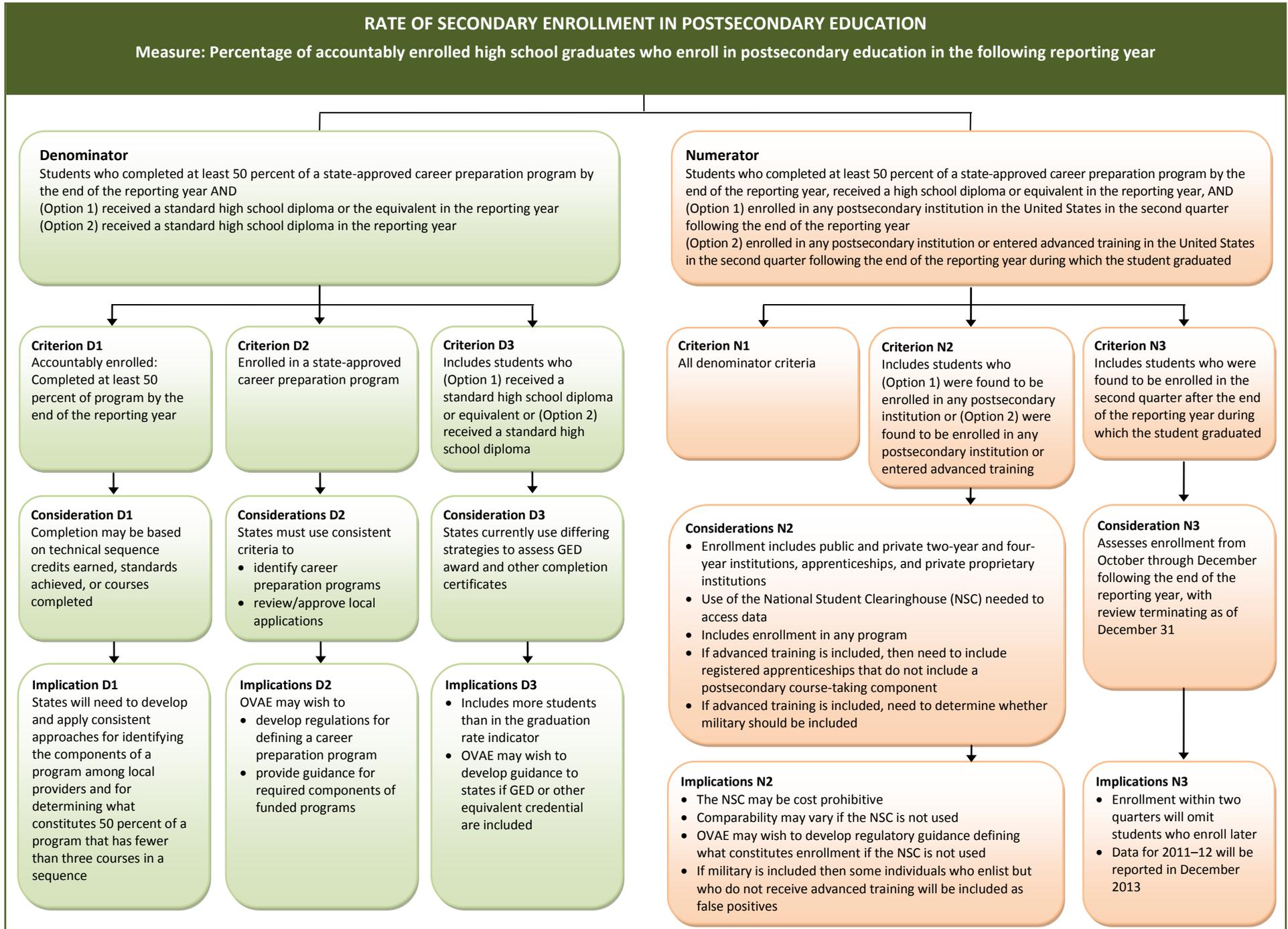
## Secondary Graduation Rate

The measure of this performance indicator assesses the graduation rate of secondary CTE students who are included in a state's computation of its four-year high school graduation rates as described in Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(vi) of the *ESEA*.

### Points of Agreement

The Design Team and SPAC discussed the measure and how the measurement approach aligns with each state's *ESEA* reporting requirements.

- **Population**—The population consists of ninth-grade students in the *ESEA* cohort who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program.
- **Method**—States should conduct administrative record matches using the state's *ESEA* accountability data that are reported to *EDFacts*.
- **Graduation**—Measurement will be limited to students earning a standard high school diploma, as defined in the *ESEA*. This measurement approach will not include students who graduate in more than four years or who earn a credential other than a standard diploma. This convention is in keeping with how states report outcomes for all students under *ESEA*. States considered modifying the *Perkins* indicator to account for students who are currently excluded from the *ESEA* indicator, but determined that doing so could bias comparisons of state graduation rates of these students with the graduation rates of other student populations.
- **Usefulness**—Design Team members raised the issue that CTE students may not meet the participation threshold until late in their high school experience, often not until their 11th- or 12th-grade year. Consequently, this indicator may offer insight into the contribution CTE makes in preparing a student for graduation, as students who drop out typically do so in earlier grades. Members recommended undertaking an analysis of state data to assess CTE course taking among dropouts and variations in levels of CTE course taking among graduates to determine the validity of this measure as currently defined. Members suggested that the secondary graduation rate be a progress measure rather than an indicator of performance given that states will have limited opportunity to improve on this indicator.
- **Alignment with other initiatives**—The measure and measurement approach are aligned with *ESEA* and *Perkins IV* reporting requirements.



## Rate of Secondary Enrollment in Postsecondary Education

The measure of this performance indicator assesses the rate at which high school graduates who attain the threshold level of CTE course taking enroll in postsecondary education in the following reporting year.

### Points of Agreement

- **Population**—High school graduates who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program by the end of the reporting year. Accordingly, the population for this indicator differs from that of the graduation indicator because it is expanded to include all students who reach a threshold level of participation and complete their education, rather than only students who are part of the *ESEA* ninth-grade cohort.
- **Types of completion**—The Design Team is offering two options for assessing completion.

Option 1: Received a standard high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)

Option 2: Received a standard high school diploma

Members discussed whether the denominator should include students who exit high school with an award other than a standard high school diploma. Advocates for using only the standard high school diploma noted that students who exit high school with a GED or alternative certificate of high school completion may lack the skills necessary for postsecondary transition. Members noted that the mission in some states is for students to graduate with a regular high school diploma, and establishing a different outcome for CTE would be inconsistent with this goal. Members also noted that including equivalency degrees, such as the GED, could undermine reliability because states are using differing criteria for assessing GED completion and some may have challenges acquiring information about GED attainment for individual students. Advocates for including equivalent awards suggested that omitting alternative routes to completion would mean that some students who completed high school would not be included in the indicator.

If the measure includes diplomas and equivalents, states should conduct administrative record matches with GED databases to determine if students have attained a GED. Members noted that data collection guidelines will be needed to ensure reported data are as comparable as possible. There may be some states that currently, or could in the future, include student self-reported data for GED attainment, instead of obtaining that information through administrative record matches.

Members also suggested that future effort to determine the measure of completion should align with other educational accountability initiatives, such as *ESEA* reporting of a ninth-grade cohort for high school graduation.

- **Postsecondary education**—The Design Team discussed and agreed that this measure could include two options for postsecondary enrollment.

Option 1: Percentage of accountably enrolled high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education in the following year

Option 2: Percentage of accountably enrolled high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education OR advanced training in the following reporting year

Participants suggested that students who graduate from high school and go on to some form of advanced training met the criteria for inclusion in the measure.

- **Advanced training**—The Design Team did not reach agreement on what constitutes advanced training, but offered two options.

Option 1: Registered apprenticeship

Option 2: Registered apprenticeship and military enlistment

Participants noted that individuals who enlist in the military often are provided with advanced skill training in an occupational area.

- **Assessing enrollment in postsecondary education and advanced training**—States will conduct administrative record matches with in-state postsecondary institutions and will access the NSC to track student enrollments. Deferred enrollment status would not be considered enrolled.

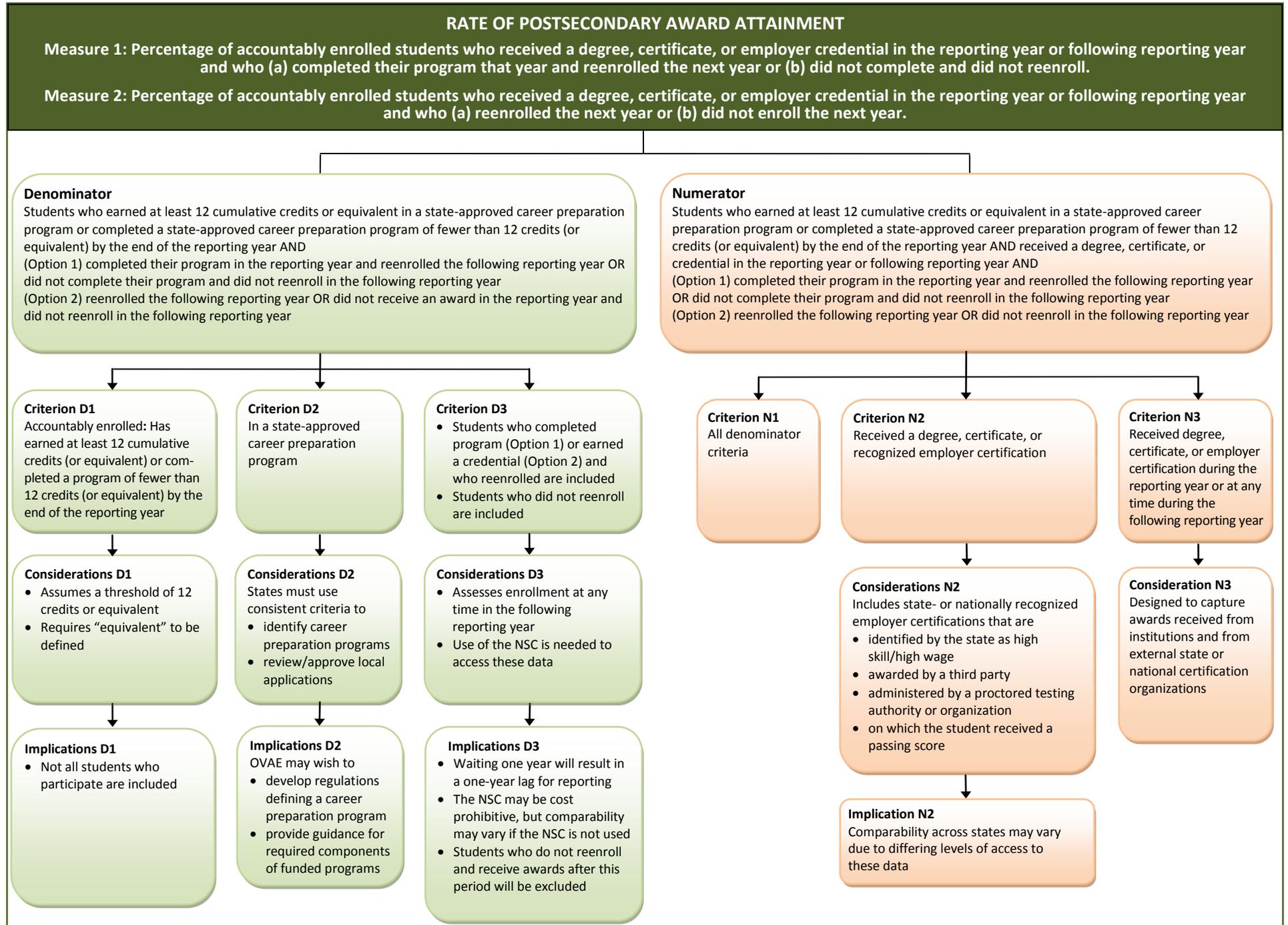
Participants suggested that the Department take steps to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the NSC on behalf of states to facilitate matching and reduce the costs of accessing NSC data.

Design Team members reported that they encountered difficulties obtaining data on the participation of high school graduates in registered apprenticeship programs. Several Design Team members noted that their states do not have an established data collection mechanism to uniformly acquire registered apprenticeship participation data that links to educational records.

- **Timing**—Secondary Design Team members agreed that the assessment of students' enrollment in postsecondary education should occur in the first term following their high school graduation, with a cutoff of December 31 of the following reporting year.

### Issues for Consideration

- **Population**—Members asked whether the denominator of this measure should include students who do not complete their full CTE program of study. Participants noted that assessing placement for students who meet the “at least 50 percent” threshold will mean that states are held accountable for students who did not complete their CTE program, and may not have received the skills necessary to prepare them for postsecondary enrollment or advanced training.



## Rate of Postsecondary Award Attainment

The measure of this performance indicator assesses the percentage of students who receive a postsecondary degree, certificate, or credential in the reporting year or following reporting year.

### Points of Agreement

- **Population**—During the August Design Team meeting, members discussed the student population (i.e., measure denominator), and determined that students who earned a credential and who reenrolled should not be excluded. Earlier iterations of the indicator measure excluded all students who reenrolled the following year. Some students may receive a certificate or other credential during the reporting year and return to take postsecondary courses the following year. These students would not be included in the measure until they exit postsecondary education, and if they do not earn another credential in the year they exit, the measure would not capture those earlier credentials. The Design Team developed two options for the student population.

Option 1: Students who earned at least 12 cumulative credits or equivalent in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits (or equivalent) by the end of the reporting year AND (a) completed their program in the reporting year OR (b) were not enrolled in the following reporting year.

Students included in the denominator for Option 1 are those who were

- accountably enrolled in the reporting year, completed the requirements of their program in the reporting year, and enrolled in postsecondary the following reporting year; or
- accountably enrolled in the reporting year, completed the requirements of their program in the reporting year, and did not enroll in postsecondary the following reporting year; or
- accountably enrolled in the reporting year, did not complete the requirements of their program in the reporting year, and did not enroll the following year.

Option 2: Students who earned at least 12 cumulative credits or equivalent in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits (or equivalent) by the end of the reporting year AND (a) who received a degree, certificate, or employer certification OR (b) were not enrolled in the following reporting year.

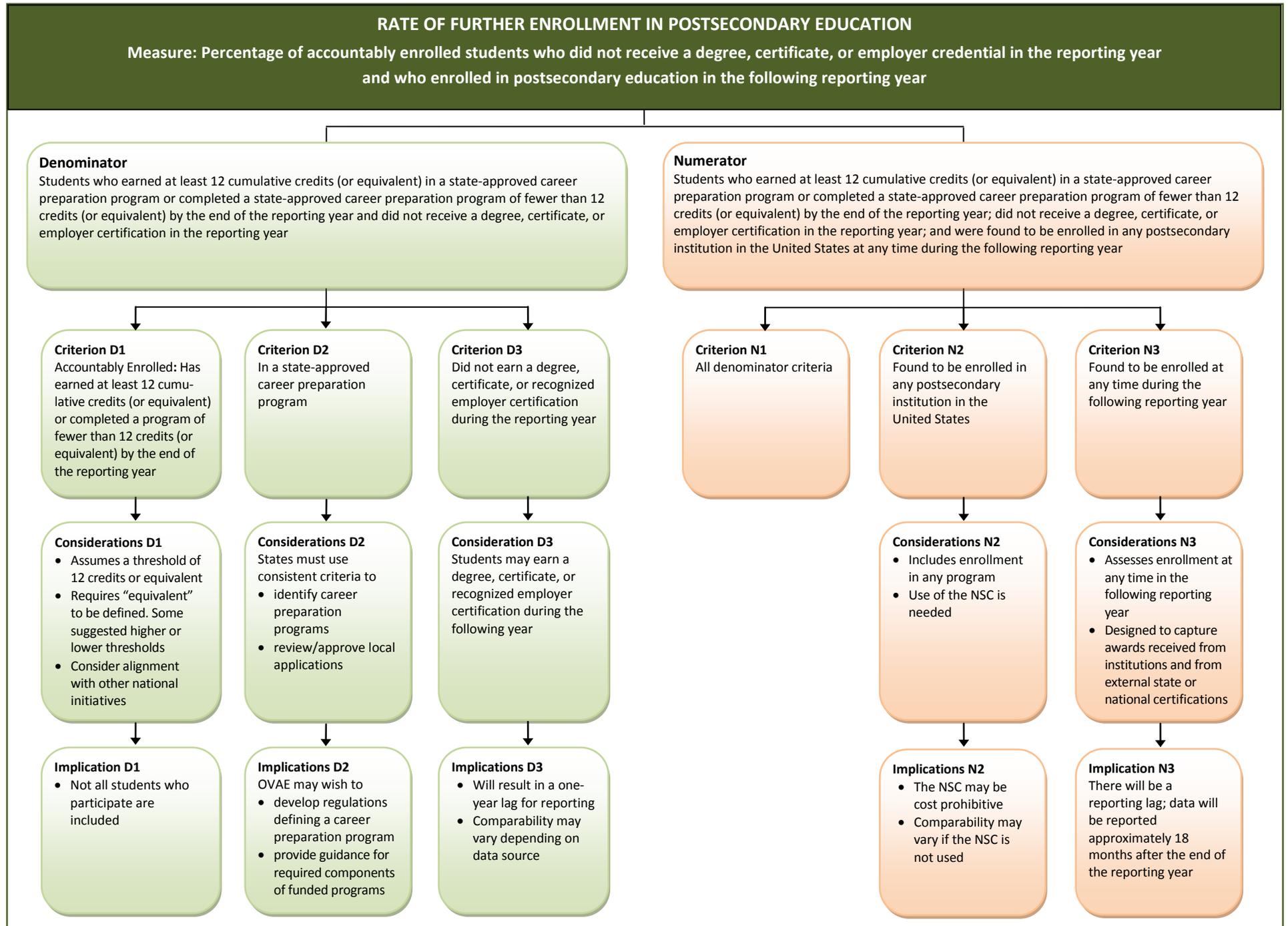
Students included in the denominator for Option 2 are those who were

- accountably enrolled in the reporting year, received a degree/certificate/certification in the reporting year, and enrolled in postsecondary the following reporting year; or
  - accountably enrolled in the reporting year, received a degree/certificate/certification in the reporting year, and did not enroll in postsecondary following reporting year; or
  - accountably enrolled in the reporting year, did not receive a degree/certificate/certification in the reporting year, and did not enroll the following year.
- **Completion**—Includes degrees and certificates awarded by postsecondary institutions as well as state- or nationally recognized employer certifications.

Design Team members would like to establish more clarity around what employer certifications or credentials will be eligible. Currently, the Design Team has defined certifications as state- or nationally recognized employer certifications that are

- identified by the state as high skill/high wage,
  - awarded by a third party,
  - administered by a proctored testing authority or organization, and
  - on which the student received a passing score.
- **Method**—States will conduct administrative record matches using state longitudinal data systems for in-state postsecondary institutions and access the NSC for out-of-state student enrollments.
  - **Enrollment in postsecondary education**—Includes U.S. postsecondary institutions offering education or advanced training. Access to data for all institutions may not be available, however, even through the NSC.
  - **Eligible to receive versus received credential**—The numerator should include only those students who received a credential, not those who were eligible to receive a degree or certificate but who did not actually receive it. In some colleges, students apply for their degrees and pay associated fees. Some students may choose not to apply because they can transfer or obtain employment without the official award, or because they prefer not to pay the fee. Design Team members, however, determined that the long-term value to the student is greater with an actual award.
  - **Reporting timeline**—The Design Team agreed that it is appropriate to look at attainment in the current reporting year and the full following reporting year. Students pursuing third-party certificates may not be able to take assessments before the end of the reporting year.

- **Reporting multiple credentials**—The measure will assess the percentage of students who attained an award; it will not count the number of awards. If a student received more than one award, they will count as one student, not as multiple awards. States may find it beneficial to internally report how many individual awards are earned.
- **Noncredit certificates**—Include noncredit postsecondary credentials if the awarding program is an eligible state-approved program.
- **List of industry-validated credentials**—Design Team members determined that if the criteria for employer credentials are clear, then states will be able to maintain and update a list of eligible credentials. SPAC members had earlier expressed concern about frequent changes and the potential effects on comparability across years.



## Rate of Further Enrollment in Postsecondary Education

The measure of this indicator assesses the rate at which students persisted in postsecondary education or transferred to another postsecondary institution in the following reporting year.

### Points of Agreement

- **Population**—Students who earned at least 12 cumulative credits or equivalent in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits or equivalent by the end of the reporting year and who did not receive a degree, certificate, or credential in the reporting year.

Earlier versions of the student population (i.e., measure denominator) specified that students could not receive a degree, certificate, or credential in the reporting year or the following reporting year. The Design Team decided to eliminate the language about the following reporting year so that students who reenroll and complete a credential the next year could be counted as part of further enrollment.

- **Method**—States will conduct administrative record matches using state longitudinal data systems for in-state postsecondary institutions and access the NSC for out-of-state student enrollments.
- **Enrollment in postsecondary education**—Includes U.S. postsecondary institutions. Access to data for all institutions may not be available, however, even through the NSC.
- **Reporting timeline**—Look for enrollment the entire following reporting year. Design Team members acknowledge that postsecondary students may attend part time and programs may begin in terms other than fall. Assessing enrollment in the full following reporting year will ensure that states capture enrollment for part-time students and those who are enrolled in programs that offer course work in terms other than fall.

## Employment and Earnings

During the August Design Team meeting, members discussed two potential measures that would inform policymakers about students' employment and earnings outcomes. The discussion was founded on the ongoing work to develop version three of the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS). Members reviewed the draft proposed CEDS data elements and used those as a basis for a dialogue around what data would be available and what measures would be possible to report.

Draft proposed CEDS data elements include the following:

- Employed while enrolled
- Employed after exit
- Earnings
- Industry(ies) of employment
- Location of employment

- Multiple jobs
- Reference quarter start and end dates
- Employment and earnings administrative data source
- Other data source

## “Success” Rate

Members discussed a measure of post-attainment success:

$$\frac{\text{Students employed but not reenrolled} + \text{Students reenrolled but not employed}}{\text{Secondary or postsecondary population}}$$

### Denominators

- Secondary: Students who completed at least 50 percent of a state-approved career preparation program by the end of the reporting year and received a high school diploma or equivalent in the reporting year.
- Postsecondary: Students who earned at least 12 cumulative credits (or equivalent) in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits (or equivalent) by the end of the reporting year and earned a degree, certificate, or employer credential in the reporting year.

### Numerators

- Secondary: Students in the denominator who were found employed but not reenrolled plus those who were reenrolled but not employed.
- Postsecondary: Students in the denominator who were found employed but not reenrolled plus those who were reenrolled but not employed.

## Points of Agreement

- **Included in employment**—Employment should include military enlistment and employment as an apprentice.
- **Method**—States collect employment data through administrative record matches using student information systems, State UI Wage Reports, the Wage Record Interchange System, and the Federal Employment Data Exchange System.
- **Enrollment in postsecondary**—States collect reenrollment data through their SLDS postsecondary linkages and the NSC.

## Issues for Consideration

The Design Team raised several issues for further discussion.

- **Threshold**—Members expressed concerns about the threshold of 50 percent completion of a program being too low for secondary. Some members advocated for reporting this for students who completed 25 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent of their program.
- **Attainment or program completion**—Members questioned whether the numerator should consider students who completed their program, earned a diploma or award, or both. Some members suggested looking at the measure for three categories of students but without negotiating targets for any of them.
- **Students included/excluded**—Members asked if individuals who have chosen not to be in the workforce could or would be excluded from the denominator and numerator.
- **Terms of employment**—Employment where earnings > \$0. May be beneficial to exclude any records where an individual did not earn more than \$0 for the employment period.
- **Status of reenrollment**—Would students have to reenroll at a higher level? For example, would an accountably enrolled postsecondary student need to enroll in a four-year institution or in a program leading to a higher credential?
- **Point in time or growth**—Members discussed the benefits of looking at this measure over time versus as a snapshot.

## Earnings

Members discussed a post-attainment earnings change measure.

- Consideration 1: Median earnings for defined populations at 6 months, 12 months, and 36 months following graduation/attainment (snapshot historical measures).
- Consideration 2: Median earnings for serial cohorts of populations at 6 months, 12 months, and 36 months following graduation/attainment (snapshot longitudinal measures).

## Denominators

- Secondary: Students who
  - completed at least 50 percent of a secondary state-approved career preparation program;
  - received a high school diploma or equivalent; and
  - were not found enrolled in further education.

- Postsecondary: Students who
  - earned at least 12 cumulative credits (or equivalent) in a state-approved career preparation program or completed a state-approved career preparation program of fewer than 12 credits (or equivalent) by the end of the reporting year;
  - earned a degree, certificate, or employer certification; and
  - were not found enrolled in further education.

### Numerators

- Secondary: Students in the denominator who were found employed with wages > \$0.
- Postsecondary: Students in the denominator who were found employed with wages > \$0.

### Points of Agreement

- **Included in employment**—Employment should include military enlistment and employment as an apprentice.
- **Method**—States collect employment data through administrative record matches using student information systems, State UI Wage Reports, the Wage Record Interchange System, and the Federal Employment Data Exchange System.
- **Enrollment in postsecondary**—States collect reenrollment data through their SLDS postsecondary linkages and the NSC.

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The Design Team raised several issues for further discussion.

- **Threshold**—Members expressed concerns about the threshold of 50 percent completion of a program being too low for secondary. Some members advocated for reporting this for students who completed 25 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent of their program.
- **Attainment or program completion**—Members questioned whether the numerator should consider students who completed their program, earned a diploma or award, or both. Some members suggested looking at the measure for three categories of students but without negotiating targets for any of them.
- **Students included/excluded**—Members asked if individuals who have chosen not to be in the workforce could or would be excluded from the denominator and numerator.
- **Trim rules**—Should there be common guidance for states to determine what, if any, records to exclude? For example, should there be guidance that requires exclusion of individuals with wages over a certain amount per quarter?

- **Approach**—Design Team members noted various ways in which the information could be reported for the measure.
  - *Bucket*: Earnings arrayed in select ranges; historical or longitudinal data show changing distributions
  - *Relative*: Earnings at point one relative to earnings at subsequent points reported annually, expressed as a ratio or some form of derived index
  - *Absolute*: Numerical or percent change between point one and subsequent points
- **Non-wage benefits and tips**—Members questioned the benefits of assessing wages without benefits and tips versus earnings that include benefits and tips.
- **Differences among states**—Some members noted that states have different economies and labor markets, and questioned how differences among states could be addressed in reporting. Reporting using the relative or absolute approaches would eliminate the use of actual earnings in reporting, but may have disadvantages in terms of clarity for the public and policymakers.
- **Data strengths and weaknesses**—Members questioned whether the available data are valid enough to report as a negotiated performance indicator. More research is needed on the validity of the data.
- **Progress indicator**—Members questioned whether earnings could be a progress indicator, reported without targets, possibly by cluster and over time.
- **Secondary**—Secondary members questioned whether earnings is an appropriate indicator for secondary students.

## Additional Indicators

During the August meeting, Design Team members also discussed potential progress indicators and indicators that participants suggested might be necessary and informative. The potential indicators fell into three categories:

- Progress indicators related to the Department’s Blueprint
- Indicators to consider for inclusion in the accountability framework
- Indicators that states may want to report internally or at the local level

## Progress Indicators Related to the Department's Blueprint

In April 2012, the Department released *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education* (Blueprint).<sup>4</sup> The Blueprint sets out the Administration's goals for *Perkins* reauthorization, laying out four core principles intended to support more rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE: Alignment, Collaboration, Accountability, and Innovation.

As part of the Blueprint, the Department is proposing a set of progress indicators upon which state and local grantees would be required to report, though no performance levels would be negotiated. These indicators include

- number of dual credits earned,
- CTE credits earned that meet high school graduation requirements,
- number of stackable credentials earned, and
- work-based learning opportunities completed.

Department representatives also noted that remediation—in relation to transition from secondary to postsecondary education—is of interest to the Department.

Design Team members engaged in a discussion about the four proposed progress indicators, offering suggestions regarding the purpose, use, and challenges associated with each.

### *Number of Dual Credits Earned*

- There is a need for clarity around the definition of dual credit and its role in *Perkins* accountability.
- Dual credit may meet differing requirements, including CTE program requirements, high school graduation requirements, and/or postsecondary certificate or degree requirements.
- Students may earn college credit but not necessarily high school credit in some programs, and clarity would be needed to determine what types of dual credit would be eligible.
- Not all states offer dual credit, and members wondered if dual credit would be required if a progress indicator were added. Policies in some states may support or limit dual credit opportunities.
- A credit may have a different meaning for different schools.
- States will be better able to assess the number of dual credits earned once state longitudinal data systems are in place and functional.
- A member asked about the purpose of a dual credit indicator, suggesting that, if CTE focuses on an at-risk and disadvantaged population, an assessment of dual credit may be superfluous. Perhaps the focus should be on other success points or earning a diploma or credential.

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*. Washington, DC: Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Accessed on June 18, 2012, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/transforming-career-technical-education.pdf>.

- Reporting how many students earn dual credit or how many dual credits are earned is a good way of presenting how CTE has a positive effect on students, including giving students a head start in postsecondary, preparing them for the rigors of postsecondary education, and saving families money on postsecondary education.

#### *Number of Stackable Credentials Earned*

- Several participants indicated their state’s postsecondary institutions offer short-term, “stackable” credentials that build to a one- or two-year certificate or associate’s degree. Students can earn credentials, go into the workforce with a credential that has value in the labor market, and return to continue their education.
- The value of stackable credentials in the labor market may vary, and some participants noted that standards for what comprises an eligible stackable credential would be needed if an indicator were added.

#### *Work-based Learning Opportunities*

- Participants noted that work-based learning opportunities are widely offered, particularly in postsecondary, and vary in scope and intensity.
- Opportunities could include volunteering, internships, job shadowing, required hours of on-the-job training, and many others.
- If an indicator were added, more discussion would be needed about the purpose as well as the definition and parameters for eligible work-based learning opportunities.

### **Indicators to Consider for Inclusion in the Accountability Framework**

Design Team members representing secondary education suggested including an indicator of technical skill attainment at the secondary level. Members differed on the question of including technical skill attainment as a negotiated indicator, with some indicating that negotiating an adjusted level of performance would reinforce the indicator’s importance at the state and local level. Others advocated for reporting technical skill attainment without a negotiated level of performance, suggesting that it is a highly informative indicator of student progress, but there is substantial variation in how the indicator is reported among states and some states may have difficulty acquiring the information for all students.

#### *Technical Skill Attainment*

- Secondary students are expected to learn technical skills through the secondary portion of their POS, and technical skill attainment should therefore be assessed.
- Technical skill attainment has become critical to program improvement at the secondary level.
- States have worked very hard since 2006 to implement technical skill assessment systems.
- In one state, a participant noted that technical skill assessments are designed in collaboration with business and industry. Businesses provide context and standards for assessments and are using attainment of the certificate to award internships and differentiated pay to students.

## Indicators that states may want to report internally or at the local level

Throughout the course of SPAC and Design Team deliberations, members noted additional indicators that may be of interest to federal and state education agencies; federal, state, and local policymakers; and local institutions and school districts. Design Team members agreed that, while the following indicators provide additional detail and information about the experiences and outcomes of CTE students, they should not be included as indicators reported to the Department. These indicators provide information that could inform state and local decision-making, however, and are documented here for reference by state and local education agencies.

### *Academic Attainment*

- A member suggested that, as states adopt the Common Core State Standards and put new assessments in place, CTE students in 10th and 11th grades will be taking those assessments.
- Assessing academic attainment of CTE students and all students could inform states about the effects of CTE on academic attainment.

### *Employability Skills*

- “College and career readiness” is a widely used term, but members noted that all states may not have mechanisms to define and assess career readiness.

### *Time to Degree/Credential*

- Postsecondary participants noted that understanding how long CTE students take to earn a credential could be very helpful.

### *Momentum Points*

- Research on “tipping points” and “momentum points” could offer states and local schools and institutions a resource for analyzing student experiences and outcomes.