



Fiscal Year 2026

Perkins Leadership Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity

Application Due Date/Time: October 24, 2025, 11:59 p.m.
Submit Application To: ICCIB.cte@illinois.gov

UNIFORM NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

| 1. | Awarding Agency Name: | <i>Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)</i> |
|-----|------------------------------------|--|
| 2. | Agency Contact: | <i>Janelle Washington, Senior Director for Career and Technical Education, janelle.washington@illinois.gov</i> |
| 3. | Announcement Type: | <i>Initial announcement</i> |
| 4. | Type of Assistance Instrument: | <i>Grant</i> |
| 5. | Funding Opportunity Number: | |
| 6. | Funding Opportunity Title: | <i>FY2026 Perkins Leadership Grant</i> |
| 7. | CSFA Number: | <i>684-00-2549</i> |
| 8. | CSFA Popular Name: | |
| 9. | CFDA Number(s): | |
| 10. | Grant Period | <i>January 15, 2026- June 30, 2027</i> |
| 11. | Anticipated Number of Awards: | <i>6-20, dependent on budget requests</i> |
| 12. | Estimated Total Program Funding: | <i>\$1,000,000</i> |
| 13. | Award Range | <i>\$50,000-\$150,000</i> |
| 14. | Source of Funding: | <i>Federal</i> |
| 15. | Cost Sharing/Matching Requirement: | <i>No</i> |
| 16. | Indirect Costs Allowed | <i>Yes</i> |
| | Restrictions on Indirect Costs | <i>Indirect/General Administration is capped at 5% of the total award amount.</i> |
| 17. | Posted Date: | <i>August 25, 2025</i> |
| 18. | Closing Date for Applications: | <i>October 24, 2025, 11:59 p.m.</i> |
| 19. | Technical Assistance: | <i>A Bidder's Conference will be held on Thursday, September 11, 2025.</i> <i>Additional technical assistance will be provided throughout the grant period to grant recipients.</i> |

A. Background and Purpose

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is inviting eligible applicants to apply for the **FY2026 Perkins Leadership Grant**. This grant package is designed to support the improvement and innovation of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming throughout the Illinois community college system. The selected focus areas align with initiatives outlined in the Illinois State Plan for Perkins V, as well as national initiatives in CTE. The ICCB will provide approximately \$1,000,000 in grant funding opportunities to be administered for the purposes of this grant.

B. Eligible Applicants

Community colleges in the State of Illinois are invited to submit proposals under this NOFO.

C. Grant Objectives

Applicants may only select one grant objective as their area of focus.

- **Objective 1: Incentivizing the Alignment of the College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) framework and Postsecondary Programs of Study.** Because of the natural and intentional alignment of the State's Perkins V Plan, the Model Programs of Study Guides, and [College and Career Pathway Endorsement \(CCPE\) framework](#), this Objective seeks to strengthen the incentives for colleges and high school districts to partner on pathway design and jointly maximize the currency and benefit of students who complete the requirements and earn CCPE. Applicants for this section of the grant must establish and provide currency to students earning CCPE, to incentivize them to enroll in an ICCB-approved Program of Study at your institution. *Note: Perkins funds cannot be directly given to students.*
- **Objective 2: Enhancing Student-Centered Support Services for CTE Students.** Community colleges serve a diverse group of students with varying needs. Student support services and related projects can help assist students, particularly those with barriers to success, persist and complete their program. *Note: Perkins funds cannot be directly given to students.*
- **Objective 3: Expanding Innovative Delivery Models.** Innovative delivery models help meet the varying needs of learners and expand access to CTE by providing flexible learning opportunities that prepare individuals for careers. By selecting Objective 3, applicants can use grant funds to infuse creativity to deliver CTE beyond traditional instruction models. Innovative delivery models may include, but are not limited to: competency-based education, enhanced credit for prior learning processes, distance learning, blended learning, flipped learning/classrooms, Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) programming, early college opportunities, simulated workplaces, etc. Additionally, under this objective, applicants may also work to consciously braid their Perkins Leadership Grant funding with one of the following state-led grant initiatives to expand innovative delivery models:

- *Advanced Manufacturing Grant*
- *Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce Grant (PATH)*
- *Rev Up EV Electric Vehicle Technology Grant Initiative*
- *Taking Back the Trades! Trades School Program Grant*

Note: Equipment and technology may only be purchased if it directly ties to the innovative delivery model. The application must detail how the equipment or technology directly supports the innovative delivery model.

D. Allowable Activities within the various Objectives:

Allowable activities will vary based on the chosen objective. The following activities are allowable and applications that utilize them may constitute exemplary applications. Applicants are not limited to these activities.

Objective 1- Incentivizing the Alignment of the College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) framework and Postsecondary Programs of Study:

Definition: *Currency is defined as, “specific incentives or benefits for CCPE earners, which could include the following: specialized access to financial or advising support upon enrollment in a postsecondary program within their CCPE area, or as streamlined access for an exclusive opportunity at the postsecondary institution or employer partner”.*

Additional examples.

- Pilot the development and implementation of a currency/incentivization model whereby earners of a CCPE would also earn a unique “currency” in the postsecondary space as a result of their efforts.
- Employer subsidies for providing work-based learning experiences for students (internships, trainings, wages, etc.) that fulfill CTE Programs of Study and the secondary districts pathway endorsement requirements.
- Fees associated with industry credential testing that are embedded in CTE Programs of Study courses and the secondary districts pathway endorsement requirements.
- Books and course material costs for courses that are included in CTE Programs of Study and the secondary districts pathway endorsement requirements.
- Increasing student Support services that begin with dual credit high school students for courses embedded in CTE Programs of Study and the secondary districts CCPE course sequence.
- Utilize the [Model Programs of Study Guides](#) to strengthen institutional programs of study. The Models were developed to intentionally align with the CCPE, creating a seamless pathway for students.
- Create and cultivate intentional early college credit including dual credit coursework in core program content (i.e. more than just general education) and career awareness activities like work-based learning experiences.
 - Activities may include planning and implementing dual credit offerings in new or existing disciplines or locations; developing and utilizing innovative instructional models that have not been attempted in dual credit classrooms in the applying district; and engaging secondary and postsecondary faculty in curriculum alignment, articulation activities, and professional development related specifically to dual credit offerings.

- Targeted scholarships or financial support for students earning CCPE upon enrollment at your institution (*will need to be supported by matching funds*)

Note: A similar project was conducted by EdSystems Center. For additional information on the results of the project, see [this blog post](#).

Objective 2- Enhancing Student-Centered Support Services for CTE Students:

- Assistance as it relates to transportation, childcare, textbook loans/lending library.
- Supplemental instruction
- High touch academic advising and career guidance including hiring a CTE Navigator(s)
- Testing and assessment preparation for CTE-related certifications and licenses
- Assistance for students transitioning into employment or seeking additional education and training.
- Services and activities to assist special populations CTE students, as defined by the Perkins Act, including ensuring program accessibility to special populations students and assisting them in overcoming barriers that may limit their opportunities for success. Exemplary projects may include developing specific support strategies to assist these individuals in overcoming barriers to success; strategizing innovative approaches for identification and collection of applicable data; advising/outreach of these students to identify their needs and develop supports based on those specific needs; and working with community partners to formulate comprehensive support strategies. *Colleges may utilize findings from their Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment and information pulled from the PODS 2.0 Data Dashboard to determine priority population(s) and existing equity gaps.* Special Populations students as defined by the Perkins Act, as well as other populations that are underrepresented are as follows:
 - ✓ Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system
 - ✓ Homeless individuals (as described in Section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)
 - ✓ Students with parents who are a member of the armed forces and are on active duty
 - ✓ Out of workforce individuals
 - ✓ English learners
 - ✓ Individuals with disabilities
 - ✓ Individuals with economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults
 - ✓ Individuals preparing for nontraditional fields
 - ✓ Single parents, including single pregnant women
 - ✓ Underrepresented racial/ethnic groups
 - ✓ Juvenile justice/departments of corrections involved individuals

Objective 3- Expanding Innovative Delivery Models:

- Purchasing or upgrading equipment to meet or exceed current industry standards. Equipment must be required to facilitate the innovative delivery model.
- Improving technology and instructional materials to align with current industry standards and expectations. Technology must be required to facilitate the innovative delivery model.
- Enhancing work-based learning through simulated workplaces that allow for

- immersive, hands-on learning experiences to prepare for careers.
- Supporting professional development that promotes effective teaching pedagogy.
- Curriculum redesign to incorporate a new delivery method or approach (e.g. blended learning, online learning, competency-based education).
- Engagement with professional organizations that support the development of the innovative delivery method.
- Incorporating [flipped learning](#) into a new or existing course.

GRANT DELIVERABLES

1. Carry out deliverables of the proposed scope of work.
2. Submit required programmatic and fiscal reports on a quarterly basis per the schedule below to:
 - Programmatic: ICCB.cte@illinois.gov
 - Fiscal: ICCB.grantpayments@illinois.gov

| Reporting Schedule (6 Quarters) | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Quarter | Period | Date Due |
| 1 | January 15, 2026 – March 31, 2026 | April 30, 2026 |
| 2 | April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026 | July 30, 2026 |
| 3 | July 1, 2026 - September 30, 2026 | October 30, 2026 |
| 4 | October 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026 | January 30, 2027 |
| 5 | January 1, 2027 – March 31, 2027 | April 30, 2027 |
| 6 | April 30, 2027 – June 30, 2027 | July 30, 2027 |

(Reporting templates and other instructions will be made available to grant recipients at a later date.)

3. Participate in any required Operational Meetings or learning workshops.
4. Submit at least one student success story. A template is provided under Grant Resources or Guidance on the ICCB website: <https://www.iccb.org/grants/grant-resources/>.
5. Provide to the ICCB copies of any documents, toolkits, modules, etc., that are developed because of these grant funds.

E. Application Package

Applications submitted under this grant program will undergo a merit-based review process. All parts of the application package must be completed by the deadline to be considered. Applicants should ensure that all elements are clearly addressed and are strongly encouraged to use headers to address all elements or some consistent form of response delineation. Applicants will receive a receipt of application. However, applicants will not be notified if there are items that are missing from their application. Applicants must use the templates provided on the ICCB website: <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/>

The application must be organized as listed below.

1. **Uniform Grant Application**

Applicants must complete each section of the “Applicant Completed Section” within the Uniform Grant Application in its entirety. If a question is not applicable, please enter NA. [A template is provided.](#)

2. **Application Narrative**

The eligible applicant must submit a narrative of **no more than twelve pages** (charts and graphs are a part of the page limitation), double-spaced, 12-point font that must include the following information in the order listed below and utilizing a header for each Numbered Section. *A template is not provided. Each applicant must use the information below to craft their own Narrative. Please note that there may be Narrative components that may not be applicable to your chosen objective. Deviations are noted below- O.1, O. 2, O. 3- so please read carefully.*

Narrative Sections

I. **Basic Project Information:**

- a. The objective (1, 2, or 3) of choice.
- b. Concise summary of your grant project, including the goals of your grant project.
- c. *Population to be Served:* Provide a description of the target population of students to be served, if applicable (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status of community, high school district). Applicants should use data as evidence for their selection. This may include but is not limited to dual credit courses, local unemployment rate, income status of community, racial and ethnic representation of the community being served.

II. **Statement of Need:**

- a. *Identify both the programmatic and financial need for these grant funds.* For example, you could identify the program of study focus; provide evidence (i.e. labor market information, state of current equipment/technology, faculty training needs, etc.) for why you selected that program of study; describe the target population of students to be served (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status of community, high school district). Your needs will vary based on your chosen objective. Please include any information that would be helpful for grant reviewers to know.

III. **Overall Project Goals and Outcomes/ Indicators of Performance:**

- a. Identify the anticipated number of students to be supported by this grant (O. 1).
- b. Identify at least one other indicator of performance (system, programmatic, or participant- level) (O. 1, 2, 3).
- c. Identify project goals and expected outcomes of this grant at your institution. These goals and expected outcomes should be reflective of the activities relayed in the Project Work Plan portion of this Narrative (O. 1, 2, 3).

IV. Project Work Plan:

Clearly describe 1. the project activities and 2. the associated timeline for each activity to be carried out during the grant period. *A chart or table is encouraged.* It may be helpful to engage in backwards mapping- begin with your goals and outcomes in mind, and craft activities to help you achieve those goals and outcomes. Timelines help to keep activities focused and on track. They also allow you to visualize the internal and external partners you will need to engage while working on this project.

- a. **Required activity for Objective 1:** Implement at least one currency/incentivization model.

V. Partnerships:

Description of all partnerships that will be party to the project. The description must include the name of the individuals engaged, which partner they represent, why their partnership is important to the project, and the specific role each partner will play. Encouraged partners include the local high school district; employer(s); community-based organization(s); labor organization(s); area career centers and workforce intermediaries; high school and college counselors and advisors; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Offices; Career Services; as well as Access/Disability Coordinators; and members of current CTE Advisory Committees. (O. 1, 2, 3- as needed)

- a. **Required partnerships for Objective 1:** [Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University](#); at least one high school in your district.

VI. Applicant Capacity and Effectiveness:

Description of the applicant's capacity to execute the project. Points of consideration- what faculty/staff capacity is to execute the project, what resources or training will need to be done to make the project successful, have similar projects been successful at the institution and any barriers that were encountered.

VII. Contingency Plan:

Description of the action plan and budget if the program plan must change, and funds are not able to be spent as defined in the original narrative and budget. An example of this could be that most of the grant funds are allocated for hiring personnel to manage the project but halfway through the grant cycle no one has been hired, and now the applicant isn't sure that it can execute the project. With a contingency plan in place, the applicant will have a better idea of what to do with the funds and how to see the project through to completion. *No more than one page.*

3. Uniform Budget ([template provided](#))

All applicants must submit a proposed budget using the Uniform Budget template. Applicants should submit budgets based upon the total estimated costs for the project. Costs should be in line with allowable costs under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act and the Education Department General Administrative Rules. Grantees should ensure that they have the institutional capacity to fully execute this grant and all funding provided with

it. Grants funds must be expended within the allowable timeframes of the grant period. For information on allowable uses of funds and other administrative requirements: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Pages/ResourceLibrary.aspx>.

F. Application/Submission Information

Each grant application package must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on October 24, 2025, to ICCB.cte@illinois.gov. Grant application and materials may be found on the ICCB website at <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/>.

All questions must be submitted electronically to ICCB.cte@illinois.gov. Phone calls will not be accepted. Include in the subject line: **[Organization's Name]** FY26 Perkins Leadership Grant Question. All questions will be posted in an FAQ on the ICCB website.

Paper copies of the applications are not permitted. Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of the e-mail containing the attachments. It is up to the applicant to ensure that all items in the package are attached and sent in the e-mail.

All applicants, funded or not funded, will be notified.

G. Grant Pre-Qualification

Interested institutions may apply for a grant but will not be eligible for a grant award until the institution has pre-qualified through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal located at www.illinois.grants.gov.

During pre-qualification, the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) verifications are performed including a check of Debarred and Suspended status and good standing with the Secretary of State. The prequalification process also includes a financial and administrative risk assessment utilizing an Internal Controls Questionnaire.

If applicable, the entity will be notified that it is ineligible for award as a result of the UEI verification. The entity will be informed of corrective action needed to become eligible for a grant award.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110 (d)) is required to:

- Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. If you are not registered in SAM, this link provides a connection for SAM registration: <https://governmentcontractregistration.com/sam-registration.asp>.
- Provide a valid UEI number in its application.
- Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active award.

ICCB will not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has fully complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements.

Grant recipients must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and equal employment.

H. Funding Information

- *Grant Period:* The grant period is January 15, 2026 – June 30, 2027.
- *Funding Availability:* A total of \$1,000,000 is appropriated from federal Perkins Title I Leadership funds for grants to eligible entities for the educational purposes as outlined under this NOFO. **Only one grant application per college.**
- *Funding Deadlines. Please note that no extensions will be given for expending funds.*
 - ✓ Grant funds must be obligated by June 30, 2027
 - ✓ Good/products must be ordered by June 30, 2027/received by August 31, 2027
 - ✓ Services must be rendered by June 30, 2027
- *Cost Sharing or Matching:* No cost sharing or matching is required.
- *Indirect Cost Rate:* Indirect cost rate/General Administration is capped at 5%.
- *Allowable and Unallowable Costs*
 - ✓ Grant recipients must adhere to the Education Department General Administrative Rules- <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200?toc=1> - and the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)- <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ224/PLAW-115publ224.pdf>.
 - ✓ **Specific to Objective 1:** Perkins funds cannot be directly given to students. However, colleges are encouraged to use State CTE match funds to fulfill this need. All funds are subject to state appropriation.
 - ✓ **Specific to Objective 3:** Equipment and technology may only be purchased if it directly ties to an innovative delivery model. The application must detail how the equipment or technology directly supports the innovative delivery model.

I. Review Criteria and Selection Process

The ICCB staff will use the criteria listed in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to conduct a merit-based review of the applications and will award points accordingly. Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of this NOFO and the grant proposal.

Applicants must demonstrate that they meet all requirements under this NOFO as described throughout.

Applicants will be notified, funded or not funded.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the Application Narrative and other documents submitted under this NOFO.

Basic Information 5%

- The applicant provided their objective of choice (1, 2, or 3).
- The applicant provided a concise summary of their grant project, including the goals of the project.
- The applicant provided information on the population to be served, if applicable. This description may include the following information:
 - Ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status of community, high school district. Using data as evidence for their selection. This may include but is not limited to dual credit courses, local unemployment rate, income status of community, racial and ethnic representation of the community being served.

Statement of Need 10%

- The applicant provided information about programmatic need.
- The applicant provided information about financial need.

Overall Project Goals and Outcomes / Indicators of Performance 11%

- The applicant identified at least one indicator of performance (ex. system, programmatic, or participant-level) and the performance indicator makes sense with the chosen objective.
- The applicant identified project goals and expected outcomes of this grant. These goals and expected outcomes should be reflective of the activities relayed in the Project Work Plan portion of this Narrative.
- The applicant identified the anticipated number of students to be supported by the grant.

Project Work Plan 16%

- The applicant clearly outlined project activities that align with the goals of the grant.
 - Project activities are clearly outlined, make sense, are applicable to the chosen objective, and well-described.
- The applicant provided clear timelines for project activities.
- A chart or table of activities/timelines is provided.

Partnerships 5%

The applicant described partnerships involved in the project. Encouraged partners include the local high school district; employer(s); community-based organization(s); labor organization(s); area careers center and workforce intermediaries; high school and college counselors and advisors; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Offices; Career Services; as well as Access/Disability Coordinators; and members of current CTE Advisory Committees.

- Names of individuals engaged.
- Which partner they represent.
- Why the partnership is important.
- The specific role each partner will play.

Capacity, Effectiveness, and Contingency Plan 10%

- The applicant provided a description of the applicant's capacity to execute the project. Points of consideration- what faculty/staff capacity is to execute the project, what resources or training will need to be done to make the project successful, have similar projects been successful at the institution, and any barriers that were encountered.
- The applicant provided a brief description of the action plan and budget if the program plan must change, and funds are not able to be spent as defined in the original narrative and budget.

Overall Application Quality 3%

- The application is thorough and detailed where required. Information makes sense and is easy to comprehend. Activities relate to the selected objective and are thoughtful as opposed to appearing to have been written in haste. Application contains minimal spelling and grammar errors.

Priority Points 3%

- Applicants Federal Perkins Basic allocation is less than \$250,000.

Uniform Budget (No Points awarded for this section because it is required. If an application does not have a budget, it will not be scored. Budget is reviewed for accuracy, allowability, and completeness; any required revisions will be requested from the institution.)

J. State Awarding Agency Contact

- **Janelle Washington**, Senior Director for Career and Technical Education
- Email: janelle.washington@illinois.gov
- Phone: (217) 785-0068

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