

Florida's Attainment Goal:

Committing to Talent Development

A strong vision for growing Florida's talent pipeline is critical to increasing economic prosperity and meeting the state's workforce demands. According to Florida's Strategic Plan for Economic Development for 2018 – 2023, 67% of the jobs created in Florida by 2025 will require education and training beyond high school (including postsecondary vocational, associate, bachelor, masters or higher).¹

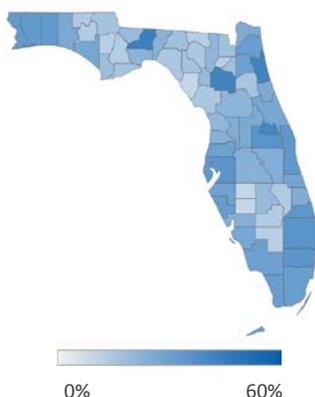
Even with historically low unemployment rates, employers report gaps in technical and professional skills of job seekers. With the demographic shifts facing Florida, including the Baby Boomer generation retiring at an accelerated pace, Florida must prioritize education and continue to build the robust talent pool needed to meet future workforce needs.

The benefits of an attainment goal

Education attainment rates are strongly correlated with economic prosperity. Floridians with an education beyond high school earn more each year than those with a high school degree alone. For example, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Floridians with a vocational certificate earn, on average, about \$10,000 annually than those with no more than a high school diploma.³

To grow Florida's economy, strengthen its resilience to economic challenges, and improve the quality of life for its citizens, Florida must close education attainment gaps. For example:

Degree Attainment by County



- There are significant differences in education attainment between Florida's racial/ethnic populations. Considering the greater diversity among the state's younger population compared to working adults nearing retirement, closing equity gaps becomes all the more important to Florida's economic future. In 2015 alone, if Florida erased income gaps by race and ethnicity, Florida's economy would have been \$157.13 billion larger.⁴
- Approximately 1.4 million of Florida's working-age adults have earned some college credit but never completed a credential, and an additional 4.2 million have a high school degree or below.⁵ Re-engaging adults who require additional skills and training will help Florida meet the workforce demands of the state's rapidly evolving economy.

What is educational attainment?

States measure their human capital or talent using a metric called postsecondary education attainment. This rate reflects the percentage of working age adults (25-64) in the state with a degree or high quality credential. Currently, 49.3% of adults in Florida hold such credentials; ranking 20th in the country.² There is broad variation in attainment rates among Florida's 67 counties and certain populations.

There is increasing momentum from the education, business, and local communities in Florida to build stronger pathways to meet local and state workforce needs. The Florida Higher Education Coordinating Council set a preliminary goal for at least 55% of working-age Floridians to hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential by 2025.⁶ The Florida Chamber of Commerce recommends a goal of 60% by 2030, closer in line with workforce projections.⁷

What Makes a Strong Educational Attainment Goal?

Florida's current goal—and goals of the other 41 states with strong educational attainment goals—has five critical components:

1. Quantifiable

The goal is numeric, and therefore, can be measured. It does not simply state that rates or numbers will increase or improve, but rather, it is specific regarding the target being sought. For example, Lumina Foundation set a national level attainment goal in 2008 that *60% of adults aged 25-64 years old will hold a high-quality degree or credential by 2025.*

2. Time-specific

The goal must be anchored in time. The level of effort and investment will be very different if the timeline is by next year versus 5-10 years from now. The year is also within sight to convey its urgency.

3. Ambitious

The target goal that is set must be ambitious. Current outcomes are not meeting the needs of citizens or the workforce, so the goal should not be one that projected trend lines indicate is easily reached by simply doing nothing.

4. Addresses equity gaps

Just as there is a wide gap in attainment between learners of color and their white peers at the national level, this gap exists in Florida as well. From both a social justice and an economic perspective, erasing these equity gaps is a must. In fact, no ambitious attainment goal will be reached without doing this.

5. Codified in a manner to influence policy and practice

The goal, meeting the four previous components, must be codified in a way that directs leaders to align their actions and provides a mechanism of accountability. Simply stating a goal without formalizing, or codifying, it does not provide the sustainability that is necessary to see the work through to the target year.

A strong vision for growing Florida's talent pipeline requires not only commitment from elected leaders, but also a strategy. Florida is well on the way, but can do more to ensure that all sectors from higher education, PK-12, business, workforce development, social services, and corrections, are aligned to the vision and goal to make Florida a more prosperous state.

Commitments to increasing education attainment across the state

There is already significant work underway at the state and regional levels to increase the proportion of workers with an education and training beyond high school. The Higher Education Coordinating Council has built expansive support for the goal throughout Florida through regional convenings with business and education leaders in major urban areas as well as rural communities. The Florida Chamber of Commerce, recognizing that talent is a stronger driver than tax incentives for economic development, published its Jobs 2030 report that, in part, shows the need to boost education attainment to meet the talent needs of Florida's fastest-growing industries. The Florida Philanthropic Network supports increasing education attainment as critical to lifting families out of generational cycles of poverty and strengthening communities.

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) for the past several years has embraced a goal of 60% postsecondary education attainment by 2025 and works with local networks across the state that set goals and develop local solutions to increase talent aligned to regional workforce needs. These networks, comprised of local leaders representing education, businesses, nonprofits, local government, and philanthropy, collectively represent 78% of the state's population. With such widespread support from leaders and stakeholders throughout the state, Florida is well-positioned to advance education attainment in partnership with regional leaders from South Florida to the Panhandle.

What is needed to create a talent development strategy for Florida?

Setting a goal is only the first item needed to develop a comprehensive talent development strategy for Florida. The goal is a critical unifier and focuser, the beacon or north star that guides the work. But leaders at the state and regional levels will need to develop an actionable plan, which examines workforce projections and target populations and includes accountability progress metrics to ensure alignment between state policy and resources to reach the goal.

- First, there needs to be a shared understanding of what success looks like along the way to the goal. As such, a set of ***accountability progress metrics*** must be identified and agreed upon. For example, FCAN looks at data on dual enrollment and industry-recognized certification completion in high school, high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, persistence and completion, student debt and employment and wage outcomes of completers. Such metrics should be disaggregated by income, race and ethnicity in order to monitor gaps. The progress measures should be displayed in a ***publicly and easily accessible dashboard online***. Such dashboards not only allow leaders to monitor progress, but they also provide stakeholders and partners a means to identify where they can contribute. The Florida Scorecard published by the Florida Chamber and the metrics dashboards published by FCAN offer good starting points.
- Second, leaders must develop a ***strategic plan*** to reach the goal that identifies policy and programmatic strategies as well as a plan to finance the development of talent. Florida's strategic plan should address the attainment gaps between priority populations such as low income, rural, and racial/ethnic minority groups.

- Third, the plan must rest with an *oversight entity*. There needs to be a body that has the responsibility of regularly monitoring progress, asking critical questions of the data, engaging in discussions of problem identification solving with responsible parties, and has the ability to make decisions or recommendations for adjustments to policies and investments.
- Fourth, the state should invest in strengthening and sustaining a *statewide longitudinal data system* (SLDS) that is capable of linking critical data across PK-12, public and private higher education, and employment. SLDSs allow leaders to learn about how students are progressing through the pipeline. Florida already has an SLDS, but it is important to ensure that the system is both transparent and able to track students who complete all types of education and training credentials.
- Finally, the state should find additional ways to *further codify the goal* for longer-term sustainability. This can be done through legislation and setting budget priorities. There are seven states that have formally codified their goals in legislation and others that have used budgeting to incentivize improved outcomes for students in order to make progress toward attainment goals. Referencing the goal as justification for policy whenever possible helps to further cement the goal and communicate the importance of the effort to Florida's future.

Looking ahead

Increasing Florida's talent pipeline to meet workforce demand requires meaningfully increasing education attainment levels. Strong leadership and a common vision are necessary to sustain this work. As the chief advocates for talent and economic development, state leaders are uniquely poised to enhance Florida's global competitiveness and position the Sunshine State as a talent hub for current and future businesses. Affirming a goal is the first step and needs to be followed by changes in policies and programs to achieve it. Without a shared and focused target, Florida will fall short of the talent that state and regional leaders and research agree is needed for the state's economy and citizens to prosper in the years ahead.



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy.

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Visit FCAN's Website

Read the latest policy briefs, view recent webinars, and sign up for email updates.

www.FloridaCollegeAccess.org

Sources

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- ¹ *Florida's Strategic Plan for Economic Development 2018-2023*. Tallahassee, FL. 2018.
 - ² Florida College Access Network. *Education Beyond High School: Why Does it Matter? Dashboard*. Tampa, FL. 2018
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 - ⁴ The National Equity Atlas. *Data Summaries: Florida*. Policy Link, 2018.
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 - ⁶ Florida Higher Education Coordinating Council. *2016 Annual Report*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Higher Education Coordinating Council, 2016.
 - ⁷ Florida Chamber Foundation. *Florida 2030: Key Targets & Strategies*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Chamber Foundation, 2018.

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is a statewide organization hosted by the University of South Florida System (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative to USF.