



PREPARING ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE FOR OPPORTUNITY & GROWTH

Recommendations from the Alabama Workforce Council's
Statewide Educational Attainment Committee

April 30, 2018



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April 30, 2018

Governor Kay Ivey:

We appreciate your leadership and commitment to improving the lives of Alabama's workers and their families. We are honored to serve the State of Alabama by helping develop strategies to grow our high-skilled workforce into 2025.

As you are aware, Alabama's economy is changing. And with it – as a state and nation – we are seeing a shift in the skills needed to compete in today's workforce. More and more, education beyond a high school degree is essential to citizens looking to build a career, improve their lives, and provide opportunities for their families.

At your request, the Alabama Workforce Council established a Statewide Educational Attainment Committee comprised of industry, government, and policy experts. The committee was tasked to better understand our changing economy and develop a public roadmap to set priorities and measure progress for the state. Through public listening sessions, surveys, and collection of data across state agencies, we have developed a strategy to address Alabama's skills gap, which we have entitled Success Plus.

Success Plus research recognizes that Alabama will need to add as many as 500,000 high-skilled employees to the workforce by 2025 to fill industry's labor needs and compete for new businesses, which would equate to approximately 60 percent of the state's working age population. To do so, the following Success Plus plan highlights five top public priorities communicated to the committee by interacting with more than 1,500 stakeholders.

We thank you for the opportunity to work with your office, leaders of education and workforce, and industry to develop strategies for success today and into the future for Alabama workers and our economy. We are pleased to present this report for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Lynn".

Jeff Lynn
Committee Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Castile".

Ed Castile
Committee Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zeke W. Smith".

Zeke Smith
Chairman, Alabama Workforce Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

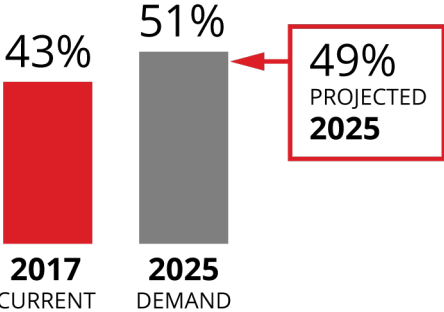
The Changing Economic Landscape and the Importance of Educational Attainment

Today's economy is changing and evolving rapidly. Aligned with a global shift from an industrial-based to a knowledge-based economy, there is growing demand for education, skills, and training in addition to a high school diploma.¹ Some reports estimate that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the United States will require post-secondary education and training in addition to a high school diploma.²

In recent years, Alabama has experienced growth in a number of emerging sectors of the economy, including automotive manufacturing, aerospace, biotechnology, and information technology. This growth, combined with a low unemployment rate, reflects the many advantages Alabama offers business and industry, including a business-friendly environment, infrastructure, and hard-working citizens. Along

Alabama educational attainment rate

gap projected in post-secondary education and training beyond high school.



with growth in Alabama's economy, there is increasing demand for a workforce with education, skills, and training in addition to a high school diploma.

Experts across the country and in Alabama are seeking to better understand this urgent need for talent. One study estimates that the national average for post-secondary educational attainment is currently 46.9 percent. While this average represents an increase of 9 percent over the last eight years, there remains a gap of 13 percent to reach the Lumina Foundation's target goal of 60 percent of Americans achieving post-secondary educational attainment.³ Like the rest of the nation, Alabama currently has a significant attainment gap. The post-secondary educational attainment

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment generally refers to the highest level of school or education an individual has completed. Post-secondary educational attainment is the level of education an individual has completed, including any certificates, credentials, or degrees (associate, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate) in addition to a high-school diploma.

¹ *A Stronger Nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent.* Lumina Foundation, <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2018/#nation>.

² Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020.* Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020/>.

³ *A Stronger Nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent,* Lumina Foundation, <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2018/-nation>.

rate in Alabama in 2017 was 43 percent, while the projected demand for post-secondary educational attainment in 2025 is 51 percent.⁴ In order to close this gap, Alabama must make a concerted and collaborative effort to focus and align efforts around post-secondary educational attainment across the state.

The importance of attainment extends beyond helping build a strong workforce and economy for the state. An individual's educational achievement is directly related to a number of economic and social benefits for individuals. Certificates, credentials, and degrees held by a member of the workforce provide vital knowledge and skills to be successful in the workplace and provide individuals with employable skills for a specific career. Research shows that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to be employed, earn more in their jobs and careers, and move up the socioeconomic ladder.⁵



Alabama must continue to develop a workforce to meet current and future demand in order to stay competitive in the global economy, help existing business and industry succeed and grow, and continue attracting more good jobs for Alabama residents. The strategic plan outlined in this report is Alabama's roadmap to meeting current and future demand, strengthening the state's workforce, helping business and industry of all sizes thrive, and providing opportunities for individuals and families across Alabama.

Alabama's *Strong Start, Strong Finish* Initiative: Setting a Goal for Post-secondary Educational Attainment

Alabama is focused on education and training as the key to helping families and creating a stronger economy. Governor Kay Ivey's *Strong Start, Strong Finish* education initiative includes workforce preparedness as one of its three priorities.⁶ As part of this initiative, Alabama has set a statewide post-secondary educational attainment goal to ensure that more of the state's workforce will have a high-quality certificate, credential, or degree by the year 2025 and beyond.

⁴ Alabama Workforce Council Educational Attainment Dashboard. AlabamaWorks!, <https://alabamaworks.com/successplus/>.

⁵ Baum, Sandy, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea. Education Pays 2013. College Board, <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/education-pays-2013.pdf>.

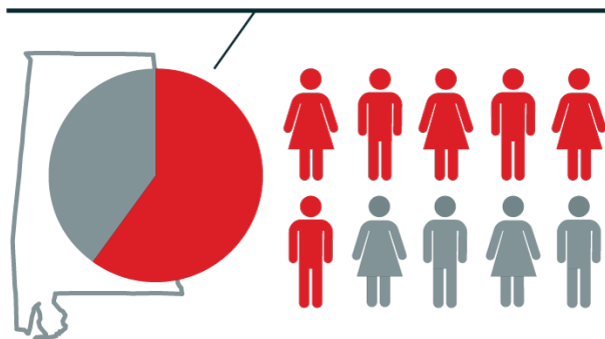
⁶ Strong Start, Strong Finish Education Initiative. State of Alabama Office of the Governor, <https://governor.alabama.gov/priorities/education/>.

Attainment goal

+500,000

high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025

= 60% of the state's working age population holding some type of certificate, credential, or degree of value



Recommendation: Working with numerous state agencies, private sector businesses, and national policy organizations, the Alabama Workforce Council (AWC) Statewide Educational Attainment Committee has mapped Alabama's current post-secondary educational attainment level and future workforce needs through the year 2025. Based on this analysis, the Attainment Committee recommends its state and community partners embrace the goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025, which would equate to roughly 60 percent of the state's working age population holding some type of certificate, credential, or degree of value.⁷

According to Attainment Committee research, this goal will meet the projected needs of Alabama industry, while providing a competitive, high-skilled workforce to support additional growth and help the state compete for new businesses. The goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025 challenges workforce partners in Alabama to make significant, yet realistic, increases in attainment outcomes in the coming years.

RECOMMENDATION AND FOCUS

The Attainment Committee's recommendation for the state's post-secondary educational attainment goal is not only bold, it is realistic and inclusive. As part of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025, the state will need to focus on providing opportunities for every Alabamian to earn the skills and knowledge to succeed. Alabama's attainment efforts will focus on:

- High school students (Grades 9 – 12)
- Out-of-School Youth (OSY)
- Traditional post-secondary students (18 – 24 years old)
- Adult learners
- Veterans
- Individuals in the corrections system
- Populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment opportunities in Alabama, including disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.

⁷ "High-skilled employees" are considered to be individuals with industry-recognized skills obtained by earning certificates, credentials, or degrees.

In order to market and promote the effort to increase the state’s attainment level, the Attainment Committee has branded this effort *Success Plus: Preparing Alabama’s Workforce for Opportunity & Growth*. Success Plus is aspirational, simple, and easily understood. The brand points towards a better personal future that is always improving and evolving, and it eliminates any perceived achievement boundary.

The Success Plus Plan: Five Priorities for Reaching the Educational Attainment Goal

The Attainment Committee led Alabama’s effort to develop a statewide strategic plan for educational attainment through a collaborative process that:

- Analyzed existing data on education and the economy;
- Engaged nearly 300 key stakeholders and leaders from across seven workforce development regions;
- Collected the perspectives of nearly 1,500 Alabama residents through an online survey; and
- Helped build capacity for planning and implementation among key partners.



Using analysis of rich quantitative and qualitative data, stakeholder expertise, and public input, the Attainment Committee identified five key priorities and goals for increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama that make up the core of the Success Plus plan.



❑ **Priority 1: Awareness**

Goal: All Alabama residents understand the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees and know how to find information and resources to get started or continue their education and training.

❑ **Priority 2: Access and Success**

Goal: Alabama residents of all ages, backgrounds, and resources have access to education and receive the continuous support they need to complete certificates, credentials, and degrees.

❑ **Priority 3: Pathways**

Goal: Pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs are defined. Programs, curriculum, and guidance along pathways encourage success, achievement, and opportunities for continuing education.

❑ **Priority 4: Leadership and Collaboration**

Goal: Partners at the state, regional, and local levels work together to support efforts aimed at increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.

❑ **Priority 5: Assessment and Continuous Improvement**

Goal: Progress toward Alabama’s goal for post-secondary educational attainment is tracked and shared regularly, and adjustments are made to the plan and strategies to ensure success.

This strategic plan outlines clear and actionable objectives to support each of the priorities and goals named above. A description of each priority is included in this report, and a summary of the overall plan follows.

Measuring Progress and Tracking Success

The AWC, the Attainment Committee, and key partners and stakeholders throughout the state understand the critical importance of measuring progress and tracking success toward Alabama’s attainment goal. As a result, five key metrics have been identified to complement the plan. It is anticipated that these metrics – which include (1) post-secondary educational attainment rate; (2) college and career readiness; (3) participation in work-based learning; (4) enrollment and completions for all levels of education and training by population, race/ethnicity, gender, and workforce region; and (5) employment and workforce participation rate – will be tracked and shared regularly.

“We must provide a support system for students and families.”

— Listening Session Participant

The strategic plan and associated metrics will support the continued alignment of agencies, partners, and stakeholders around key priorities and strategies while ensuring Alabama meets current and future demand, strengthens the state’s workforce, helps business and industry of all sizes thrive and grow, and provides opportunities for individuals and families across Alabama.

Success Plus: Preparing Alabama's Workforce for Opportunity & Growth

GOAL

To add 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025.

PRIORITIES

1. Awareness

2. Access and Success

3. Pathways

4. Leadership and Collaboration

5. Assessment & Continuous Improvement

GOALS

All Alabama residents understand the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees and know how to find information and resources to get started or continue their education and training.

Alabama residents of all ages, backgrounds, and resources have access to education and receive the continuous support they need to complete certificates, credentials, and degrees.

Pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs are defined. Programs, curriculum, and guidance along pathways encourage success, achievement, and opportunities for continuing education.

Partners at the state, regional, and local levels work together to support efforts aimed at increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.

Progress toward Alabama's goal for post-secondary educational attainment is tracked and shared regularly, and adjustments are made to the plan and strategies to ensure success.

OBJECTIVES

1A. Develop **public awareness campaigns** to educate and inform Alabama residents about opportunities and access to high-demand jobs.

1B. Develop **information about earning certificates, credentials, and degrees** that lead to high-demand jobs and feature it on the **AlabamaWorks! one-stop shop website**.

1C. **Simply and consistently communicate** the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees across the state.

1D. **Educate and engage champions** from education (career coaches, teachers, and administrators), employers (business, industry, career centers), government, and community partners (churches, libraries, nonprofits) to play a role in increasing educational attainment.

2A. Provide **education about financial aid**, personal finance, and debt management for students, families, and job seekers.

2B. Develop strategies to support **affordability of education and training**.

2C. Identify **barriers to access and success**, such as transportation, family healthcare, and childcare, and develop innovative and creative programs to address those barriers.

2D. Develop **student success services and navigation programs** at all levels of education and training.

2E. Develop strategies to **ensure equity of access and support** for populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment, including disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.

2F. Promote access to education and training for **individuals in the corrections system**, including those seeking pardon or parole.

2G. Promote access to education and training for **veterans**.

2H. Develop **online tools** to support access and success and share via website (see 1B).

3A. Design and communicate **clear pathways** from education and training to **high-demand jobs**.

3B. Expand **CTE and dual-enrollment** programs across the state and invest in training excellent teachers for these programs.

3C. Expand **work-based learning** programs across the state.

3D. Expand **apprenticeship opportunities** for youth and adults.

3E. Integrate **life and employment skills** in curriculum and training at multiple levels.

3F. Develop a formal process for establishing and evaluating **high-quality credentials** driven by the needs of business and industry on an ongoing basis.

3G. Strengthen the network of well-trained **career coaches and career coordinators** at all levels of education and training.

3H. Strengthen and expand use of statewide **career planning tools** for all levels of education and training.

4A. Develop a collaborative structure and process to **support implementation** of the strategic plan and develop the action steps, timelines, champions, resources, and metrics for each objective. Engage education, employers, government, and community partners in this collective impact model.

4B. Engage **regional leaders and workforce councils** and their membership to support implementation at the local level and ensure education and training leads to jobs for individuals.

4C. Integrate attainment goals **into regional workforce council strategic plans**.

4D. Evaluate **current resources and funding** related to educational attainment efforts, and **identify and commit resources** (funding, expertise, time) to initiatives identified in the strategic plan based on measurable outcomes.

4E. Identify **best practices** within Alabama and across other states and replicate these models.

5A. Develop a **dashboard to track and share progress** for the strategic plan on a regular basis.

5B. Strengthen **data collection and reporting** related to education and workforce outcomes by linking existing data across state agencies.

5C. Analyze data and use the outcomes to **continuously improve programs**, recommend funding allocation, and propose future budget needs on a regular basis.

5D. Develop a process for forecasting **high-demand jobs** at the state and regional levels annually.

5E. Promote **development of educational and credential attainment targets** across the state that are aligned with the strategic plan.

5F. Formally **review and update the strategic plan** annually.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alabama Workforce Council

The AWC was tasked with developing and presenting recommendations for Alabama's statewide educational attainment goal. The AWC is comprised of business executives from some of the most important industries and organizations in the State of Alabama. Created in 2014 by the Alabama Legislature, the Council's goal is to facilitate collaboration between government and industry to help Alabama create a sustainable, top-notch workforce that is competitive on a global scale. Since its inception, the Council has been committed to analyzing important issues related to workforce development and making sound recommendations that will help to create more and better opportunities for all Alabama residents.

NAME	ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED
Rep. Alan Baker	Alabama House of Representatives
Jimmy Baker	Alabama Community College System
Scott Bowers	AAA Cooper Transportation
Mac Buttram	Former State Representative
Ed Castile	Alabama Department of Commerce
George Clark	Manufacture Alabama
Phillip Cleveland	Marshall County School System
Norman Crow	D.T. & Freight Company
Chuck DiLaura	Neptune Technology Group, Inc., Retired
Blaine Galliher	Windom Galliher & Associates
Kay Gray	Dynetics, Inc.
Dale Greer	Cullman Economic Development Agency
John Hackett	Kamtek
Seth Hammett	PowerSouth
Jason Harper	Madison County Commission
Allen Harris	Bailey-Harris Construction
Jennifer Himburg	ALFA
Philip C. (Chap) Jackson	Coosa Composites, LLC
Randy Jordan	Bryant Bank
Mike Kitchens	ACIPCO
Christy Knowles	Coosa Valley Medical Center
Sandra Koblas	Austal Ship Building
Jeff Lynn	Alabama Community College System
Jerry Mays	Former Mayor of Phil Campbell
Patrick (Pat) McCarty	Aerospace Coatings
Tim McCartney	McCartney Construction Company, Inc.
Joseph B. Morton	Business Education Alliance
Mike Oatridge	Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, LLC
Joe Patton	Westervelt Company
Cleveland (Cleve) Poole	Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Jim Purcell	Alabama Commission on Higher Education

Randy Rogers	Evonik Corporation
Gary Savage	B.L. Harbert Corporation, Retired
Ed Richardson	Alabama State Department of Education
Randy Skagen	NUCOR Steel
Zeke Smith	Alabama Power Company
Arthur J. (Art) Tipton	Southern Research Institute
Sec. Fitzgerald Washington	Department of Labor
Terry Waters	Association of Edison Illuminating Companies
Keith Weil	Golden Dragon Copper Tubing, Retired

Statewide Educational Attainment Committee

In August 2017, the AWC established the Statewide Educational Attainment Committee, which is made up of industry, government, and policy experts. The purpose of the committee is to develop a public roadmap to help state leaders set priorities and measure progress toward increasing attainment levels in Alabama. The Attainment Committee has led the effort to develop the Success Plus plan.

NAME	ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED
Jeff Lynn (Chair)	Alabama Community College System
Ed Castile (Co-Chair)	Alabama Department of Commerce
Rep. Alan Baker	Alabama House of Representatives/Alabama Workforce Council
Sen. Clyde Chambliss	Alabama Senate
Rep. Terri Collins	Alabama House of Representatives
Brandon Demyan	Office of The Senate President Pro Tempore
Chuck DiLaura	Alabama Workforce Council
Sec. Jeff Dunn	Alabama Department of Corrections
Sandra Koblas	Alabama Workforce Council
Sec. Clyde Marsh	Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs
Cynthia McCarty	Alabama State Board of Education
Nick Moore	Office of the Governor
Jim Purcell	Alabama Commission on Higher Education
Sec. Jeana Ross	Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
Kristina Scott	Alabama Possible
Sec. Fitzgerald Washington	Alabama Department of Labor
Andrew Westcott	Office of the Speaker of the House

PLAN PARTNERS

The Attainment Committee partnered with the following organizations in developing the strategic plan:

- Branding and Communications: Direct Communications and IDEAS
- Data and Analytics: StrategyWise
- Policy Development: Lumina Foundation, Strategy Labs, and HCM Strategists
- Strategic Planning and Project Management: Clarus Consulting Group



ALABAMA'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GOAL

500,000 High-Skilled Employees

The Attainment Committee recommends its state and community partners embrace the goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025. Critical to this goal is equipping individuals with industry-recognized skills obtained by earning certificates, credentials, or degrees. The recommended goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce equates to roughly 60 percent of the state's working age population holding some type of certificate, credential, or degree and was developed following research and analysis of existing data.

The goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to the workforce will not only meet projected needs of Alabama industry, it will also provide a competitive, high-skilled workforce to support additional growth, compete for new businesses, and help improve quality of life in the state through overall economic health. The goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025 challenges workforce partners in Alabama to make significant, yet realistic, increases in attainment outcomes in the coming years.

+500,000

**high-skilled employees to
Alabama's workforce by 2025**

330,000 jobs

projected as the result of
new job opportunities.

170,000 jobs

expected to be vacated as
retirees leave the workforce.



Completion Targets by Level of Post-Secondary Educational Attainment

In addition to informing an overall attainment goal for Alabama, the Attainment Committee’s research considered the type of certificates, credentials, and degrees needed to support economic growth. This data can be used by individual institutions, agencies, colleges, and universities as they consider setting attainment targets in the future.

Credentials of Value

As part of Alabama’s success in adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama’s workforce by 2025, the state will work to equip individuals with the skills they need by earning certificates, credentials, or degrees. Degrees – including associate, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate – are a significant component of reaching Alabama’s attainment goal and are clearly defined. Attainment earned through a degree from an accredited educational institution is the recognition of completion of defined studies toward an employable skill. Certificates and credentials are also critical components of the attainment goal but can be more ambiguous with regard to the value they provide members of the workforce and the economy in which they are employed.

There are a number of professional groups, industries, vendors, and government agencies bestowing credentials for skills-based training in Alabama. These organizations often act independently of one another in determining what credentials to provide and how those credentials align with the need in Alabama. As part of the development of this strategic plan, the Attainment Committee evaluated certain foundational aspects important to defining credentials of value by exploring two key questions.

Key Question 1: For whom or what is a credential of value creating “value”?

AWC and Attainment Committee research suggests Alabama’s definition for a certificate or credential of value should provide a roadmap to meeting industry needs, creating new job opportunities, and helping grow the state’s economy. For these reasons, the state should focus on adding value for:

- **Individuals** – Do these skills create better career opportunities for Alabama residents to obtain and retain employment?
- **Existing business and industry** – Do these skills meet an industry demand?
- **State economy** – Do these skills create opportunities for business growth and recruitment to our state?

HIGH-QUALITY CERTIFICATE



ASSOCIATE DEGREE



BACHELOR’S DEGREE



*15,787 Bachelor’s Degree-holders likely to also attain higher degree.

MASTER’S DEGREE



DOCTORATE AND PROFESSIONAL DEGREE



■ 2016 COMPLETIONS

■ 2025 COMPLETION GOAL

Key Question 2: What characteristics carry weight in valuing a credential?

A review of best practices from various states and national organizations suggests the following characteristics are important to creating better opportunities for Alabama employees and employers:

- **Valuable** – Leads to increased wages that are at least 20 percent higher than those earned by an individual with a high school diploma alone; provides for career advancement and increased job security.
- **Portable** – Transferable to multiple employers and provides broad workforce opportunities; recognized as skills necessary to be successful in the state’s economy.
- **Stackable** – Provides a base for additional, continuous, or advanced training and/or education that can expand expertise and create additional wage value.
- **Trackable** – Can be quantifiably tracked by the state to ensure that awarded certificates align with industry needs and provide continued value to the bearer.
- **Skills Based** – Awarded by professional groups, industry, vendors, and government agencies to individuals demonstrating measurable technical or occupational skills.
- **In Demand** – Responds to a demonstrated need by employers in Alabama to meet current and future workforce needs of the state’s evolving economy.



NEXT STEPS

As representative industry leaders, members of the AWC and Regional Workforce Councils are positioned to provide unique insight into emerging economic trends and future workforce needs in Alabama. The Attainment Committee recommends the AWC and its Regional Workforce Council partners develop a strategy to periodically review industry needs and provide input as to the best process to determine what credentials should be counted towards the state’s attainment goal. This is included as an objective in the strategic plan.

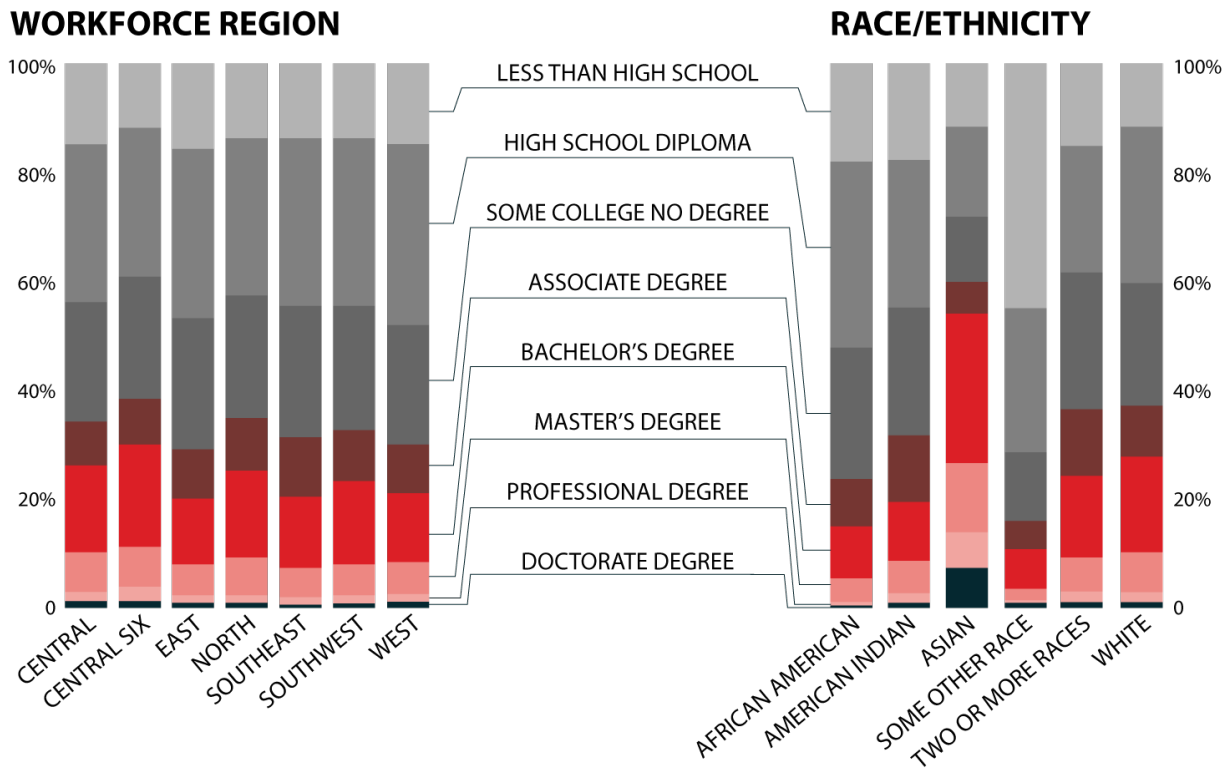
ATTAINMENT TODAY

The Existing Environment: Baseline Data and Statistics

Alabama’s plan for increasing post-secondary educational attainment is grounded in data and analysis beyond simply acknowledging the existing gap between current supply (43 percent) and future demand (51 percent). To better understand the current state of education, employment, and the workforce, the Attainment Committee worked with data experts from state agencies, national thought leaders, and the private sector to develop a detailed map of Alabama’s attainment level and future workforce needs through 2025. The resulting data dashboard has provided the Attainment Committee with a clear picture of Alabama’s workforce needs and the unique challenges in each region of the state. The data dashboard will be made available on the AlabamaWorks! website, and highlights from the data dashboard are included below.

1.) ATTAINMENT RATE BY DEMOGRAPHICS AND GEOGRAPHY

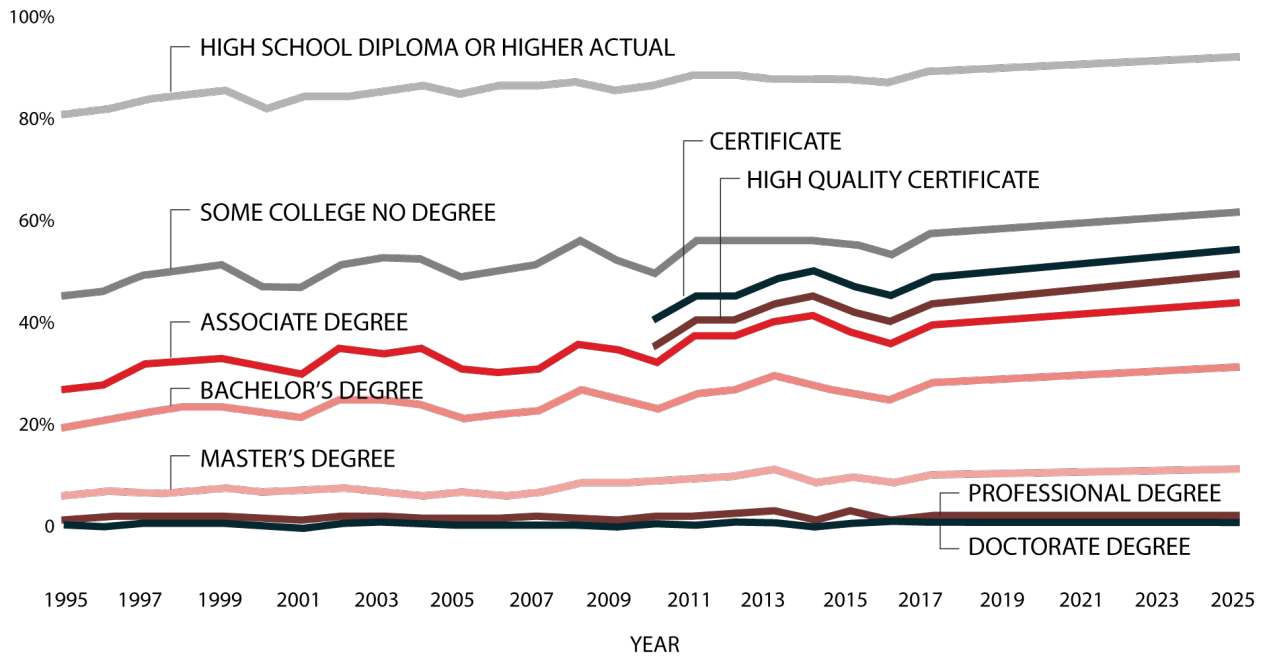
Alabama is a diverse state in terms of demographics and geographic regions. Both of these dimensions provide important context for understanding educational attainment across the state.



NOTE: Attainment rate does not include certificates of value in charts in above.

2.) ATTAINMENT RATE OVER TIME

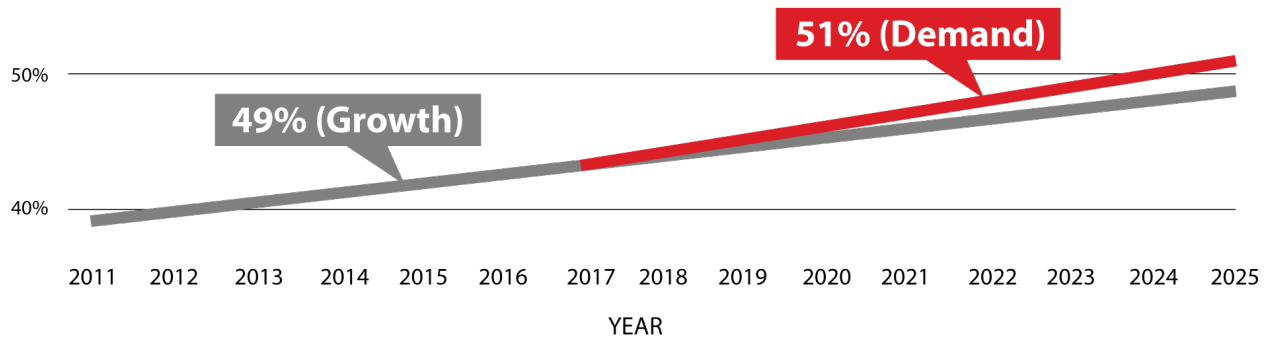
Alabama's attainment rate has increased over time from 1995 through 2017. This trend is projected to continue through 2025.



3.) FUTURE DEMAND

Beyond 2017, the demand for high-skilled employees in Alabama is anticipated to outpace the natural rate of growth by an increasing margin.

Attainment Growth vs. Demand



Analysis of future educational demand by major occupation groups suggests that the demand for high quality certificates, credentials, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees will be higher in 2025 than it was in 2017.

4.) ADDITIONAL KEY METRICS

The AWC, the Attainment Committee, and key partners and stakeholders throughout the state understand the critical importance of measuring progress and tracking success toward Alabama’s attainment goal. As a result, five key metrics have been identified to complement the plan. It is anticipated that these metrics will be tracked and shared regularly.

	Success Plus Metrics	Purpose	Data Source
1	Post-secondary Educational Attainment Rate	Measures progress toward overall post-secondary educational attainment goal	Educational Attainment Data Dashboard
2	College and Career Readiness	Indicates readiness of high school graduates to continue along pathways to continuing education opportunities and high-demand jobs	ALSDE College and Career Ready Dashboard
3	Participation in Work-Based Learning	Serves as an indicator for career success	Alabama Community College System, Alabama Dept. of Commerce, and Alabama State Dept. of Education
4	Enrollment and Completions for All Levels of Education and Training by Population, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Workforce Region	Measures progress toward closing attainment gaps for particular populations and regions	Alabama Commission on Higher Education
5	Employment and Workforce Participation Rate	Demonstrates alignment between workforce preparedness and business/industry demand	Alabama Department of Labor

The Existing Environment: Key Insights from Listening Sessions

The Attainment Committee employed a mixed methods approach of integrating quantitative data with qualitative data to gain knowledge, inform plan development, and create solutions. In addition to undertaking an assessment of the existing environment through analysis of quantitative data, the Attainment Committee sought to gather the perspectives of key stakeholders across Alabama, including individuals and organizations involved with education, business, industry, government, workforce development, economic development, and community partners. Qualitative data was collected through listening sessions with members of the seven regional workforce councils. Approximately 300 stakeholders participated in listening sessions to identify opportunities, strengths, challenges, and priorities for increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama. Key

findings from listening sessions are below, and a full report on insights from listening sessions is included as Appendix A.

1.) Key Observations

Across regions and areas of expertise, three key observations about Alabama’s existing post-secondary educational attainment environment provided important context for the strategic plan.

A. **Window of Opportunity.** *Today presents a unique opportunity to refocus and align efforts related to post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.* At the statewide, regional, and local levels, stakeholders report growing commitment, collaboration, and leadership around attainment initiatives.

B. **Regional Workforce Councils.** *Regional workforce councils offer valuable infrastructure for post-secondary educational attainment efforts.* While each region is unique in terms of its opportunities and challenges, mix of urban and rural areas, and industry clusters served, the common structure of the regional workforce councils – including each region’s ability to engage key business, industry, education, and government and community partners – could provide an important template and resource for implementing the strategic plan.

C. **Equitable Access and Success.** *To ensure every Alabama resident possesses the skills and knowledge to succeed, the state should focus on populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment opportunities.* This includes disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.



2.) Strengths, Opportunities, and Best Practices

Alabama has a number of key strengths and assets the state can build on as it works to close the post-secondary educational attainment gap.

A. **Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Dual Enrollment.** Key Finding: Alabama’s CTE and dual-enrollment programs are preparing students for college and careers and strengthening the pipeline from high school to college and careers.

B. **Work-Based Learning.** Key Finding: Alabama’s work-based learning programs – including apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education programs – are providing a strong foundation for students to make the school-to-work transition.

- C. Career Fairs and Expos.** Key Finding: Well-coordinated career fairs and expos are exposing students and workers to career opportunities through events and providing critical networking opportunities among students, workers, educators, administrators, and employers.
- D. Credentialing.** Key Finding: Credentialing offered by a range of entities and in a variety of fields and industries is promoting career readiness at the secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as for current members of the workforce.
- E. Career Coaches.** Key Finding: Career coaches and school counselors are providing critical support that enables students to learn about and explore college and career opportunities.
- F. Collaboration.** Key Finding: Partnerships among education and employers are growing, and where the partnerships are strong, they are accelerating efforts to increase post-secondary educational attainment.
- G. Higher Education.** Key Finding: Institutions of higher education, including the Alabama Community College System, four-year colleges and universities, and graduate schools, are providing critical infrastructure and services related to post-secondary educational attainment in the state.
- H. AIDT.** Key Finding: AIDT, which serves as Alabama’s workforce training agency, is providing critical infrastructure and training services that promote and increase educational attainment in the state.
- I. Regional Workforce Councils.** Key Finding: Alabama’s seven regional workforce councils are providing focused support for attainment and workforce development at the local level.
- J. Career Tech Centers and Career Centers.** Key Finding: Alabama’s career tech centers across the state provide key space and resources for education and training programs, while Alabama’s career centers help connect individuals to job opportunities.



3.) Challenges, Opportunities, and Priorities

The stakeholders noted Alabama has a number of key challenges, opportunities, and priorities the state must address as it works to close the attainment gap.

- A. Awareness.** Key Finding: The public is not aware of the full range of post-secondary educational attainment pathways available to individuals and the career opportunities to which they lead.
- B. Access.** Key Finding: Certain populations experience challenges in terms of access to education and training opportunities. These barriers to access include a lack of funding, transportation, family healthcare, childcare, and broadband service.



- C. Social and Economic Factors.** Key Finding: Substance abuse, soft skills, work ethic, and a lack of financial incentives to work can be barriers to post-secondary educational attainment.
- D. Collaboration.** Key Finding: Where collaboration and partnerships are strong, efforts to increase post-secondary educational attainment and workforce readiness are yielding results. There are opportunities across the state to continue to grow and expand collaboration and partnerships.
- E. Curriculum and Instruction.** Key Finding: Lack of resources for teaching, aligning, and supporting individuals along a college or career pathway, and developing strong curriculum geared toward industry need are also barriers.
- F. Policy and Data.** Key Finding: Education policy can be better aligned with attainment efforts. The lack of reliable data is a barrier to promoting and tracking attainment.

The Existing Environment: Key Insights from Online Survey

The Attainment Committee sought the perspectives of a cross-section of the state's population through an online survey. The primary purpose of the survey was to capture a sample of individual residents' perspectives and opinions related to post-secondary educational attainment both broadly and personally, as well as the perspective of parents on their child/children's attainment opportunities. The survey used a non-representative, convenience sample. While this limits the ability to make valid inferences about the larger population, survey findings can be used to supplement listening session findings in order to inform the current planning effort. A full survey report is included as Appendix B of this report, and key findings are included below.

- 1. Access to Information & Resource Awareness.** Key Finding: There are opportunities to improve access to and awareness of key resources related to post-secondary educational attainment.
- 2. General Opinions.** Key Finding: Respondents generally recognize the importance of having a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree.
- 3. Characteristics of A Good Job.** Key Finding: Respondents named benefits, wages, and opportunities for advancement as the top characteristics of a good job.
- 4. Attainment, Jobs, & Quality of Life.** Key Finding: Respondents see a relationship between the attainment of a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree, a good job, and/or a better quality of life.
- 5. Attainment & Job Confidence.** Key Finding:
Respondents are most confident that a four-year degree can lead to a good job currently and for their children in the future. Seventy-eight percent of respondents are confident or very confident a four-year degree can lead to a good job, 61 percent of respondents are confident or very confident a two-year degree can lead to a good job, and 52 percent of respondents are confident or very confident an industry-recognized certificate can lead to a good job.
- 6. Drivers of Attainment.** Key Finding: The main drivers for pursuing or being interested in pursuing a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree are a desire to meet a personal goal and to obtain a good job.
- 7. Barriers to Attainment.** Key Finding: The most frequently named barrier to completing or pursuing a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree is the cost, primarily including the cost of tuition, books, and housing. A related barrier is loss of income while in school.

“We must change perceptions and create buy-in from parents, educators, business, and industry.”

— Listening Session Participant

BUILDING THE FUTURE: STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The Success Plus plan is built around a critical need and a goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama’s workforce by 2025. The following terms and definitions describe the framework of the strategic plan.

- Strategic Priorities: Overarching areas of focus for the strategic planning period
- Strategic Goals: Desired end result to be achieved within each strategic priority area
- Objectives: High-level activities or approaches used to achieve strategic goals

PRIORITY AREAS



The pages that follow provide a detailed description of each of the Success Plus plan’s five priority areas and corresponding goals and objectives. For each priority, the plan includes background information, key facts and findings, and best practices that have informed the goal and objectives for each priority. This content references research from key partners across the state and nation, data from the Educational Attainment Data Dashboard, key stakeholder



input gathered from listening sessions across the state (Appendix A), and insights from close to 1,500 Alabama residents gathered through an online survey (Appendix B). Examples of some of the best practices identified during the planning process are included in Appendix C.

The Attainment Committee focused on a strategy for implementing the strategic plan, even as it worked to develop the overall plan, which includes the following elements of the framework to support a strong transition from planning to implementation:

- Preliminary Action Steps: Develop ideas and plans that will enable the Attainment Committee to continue its momentum and progress in year one of plan implementation (Appendix D).
- Target Outcomes: Process measures are designed to reflect meaningful movement toward the state's overall attainment goal.

Focusing on the five priority areas through a coordinated implementation process will ensure a path forward for the state that will build on its strengths and leverage opportunities for the future.



AWARENESS

Success Plus Goal

The Awareness goal is for all Alabama residents to understand the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees and to know how to find information and resources to get started or continue their education and training.

Overview

Across Alabama, there is a significant opportunity to improve public awareness around the importance of post-secondary educational attainment, the full range of education and career pathways that lead to success, and the resources available to promote access and provide support to individuals pursuing post-secondary educational attainment. The Success Plus plan outlines an ambitious goal to promote awareness around education and training across Alabama. Objectives and strategies developed to achieve this goal focus on easily accessible information and resources, clear and consistent communication, and engagement of partners across the state.



Opportunities and Strategies

Public Awareness

Increasing public awareness and creating a positive public perception of the full range of education and career pathways available to individuals in Alabama is a foundational step toward increasing the state's attainment level. Stakeholders in every region of the state named public awareness as a top priority. According to stakeholders, the prevailing public perception in the state is that a four-year degree is the primary route to career success. This suggests there is an opportunity to build public awareness across the state about attainment opportunities outside of a four-year degree.

There are a number of existing assets, resources, and model programs related to increasing awareness the state can build on and expand. Stakeholders pointed to well-coordinated career fairs as successful examples of events creating awareness among students and workers about career opportunities and providing networking opportunities among students, workers, educators, administrators, and employers. Stakeholders also identified industry tours as a successful strategy for building awareness that can be replicated. Industry tours for students, teachers, and administrators increase understanding of career opportunities and support strong partnerships.



BEST PRACTICE: Worlds of Opportunity, Worlds of Work, and Alabama Department of Labor Career Fairs

Worlds of Opportunity and Worlds of Work are annual career expo events geared toward eighth grade students that take place in all seven workforce council regions across the state. These events bring together partners from education, business, industry, and other key entities to create a

dynamic and educational experience for students to learn about a range of career pathways and opportunities available in the region. In addition, the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) has hosted career fairs in each region for the current workforce population. One ADOL career fair held in Birmingham focused on disabled populations.

SUCCESS PLUS **OBJECTIVE**

Develop public awareness campaigns to educate and inform Alabama residents about opportunities and access to high-demand jobs.

Access to Information and Resources

Building public awareness around educational opportunities in Alabama must be complemented by a focus on providing access to information and resources about how to get started with or continue education and training. In an online survey of a sample of Alabama residents, 26 percent of respondents do not have or are unsure if they have adequate access to the information and resources they need should they want to pursue a post-secondary degree or certificate. In the same survey, 26 percent of responding parents do not have or are unsure if they have adequate access to the information and resources they need should their child/children want to pursue a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree. Closing gaps in awareness of and access to information and resources is a critical opportunity.

SUCCESS PLUS **OBJECTIVE**

Develop information about earning certificates, credentials, and degrees that lead to high-demand jobs and feature it on the AlabamaWorks! one-stop shop website.

Clear and Consistent Communication

Increasing post-secondary educational attainment is a long-term and complex task that will involve partners and stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds, industries, and sectors, as well as the public. It is critical that Alabama develop a common language for the state's attainment efforts that supports clear and consistent communication about definitions, goals, and strategies related to attainment. According to stakeholders, a common language and clear set of key messages will ensure stakeholders, partners, and the public understand their role in increasing attainment levels and help Alabama reach its attainment goal.

SUCCESS PLUS **OBJECTIVE**

Simply and consistently communicate the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees across the state.

Engagement of Champions and Partners

Partnerships among education, employers, government, and community stakeholders are growing. Where partnerships are strong, they are accelerating efforts to increase attainment levels. According to stakeholders, there remain critical opportunities to continue building collaboration among all key partners. These stakeholders agree that increasing post-secondary educational attainment in the state will require the involvement of many champions to reach students, families, job seekers, and partners across the state.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Educate and engage champions from education (career coaches, teachers, and administrators), employers (business, industry, career centers), government, and community partners (churches, libraries, nonprofits) to play a role in increasing educational attainment.

Target Outcomes

Preliminary target metrics and outcomes that will support progress in the Awareness priority include:

- **Increase in enrollment and completions**
- **Increase in awareness of information resources as measured by statewide survey**
- **Increase in traffic to the AlabamaWorks! Website**



ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Success Plus Goal

The Access and Success goal is that Alabama residents of all ages, backgrounds, and resources have access to education and receive the continuous support they need to complete certificates, credentials, and degrees.

Overview

Alabama residents face significant barriers to accessing education after high school, with certain populations experiencing particular and pronounced challenges in seeking to successfully complete a certificate, credential, or degree. The Success Plus plan outlines an ambitious goal to promote access and success in education and training for all Alabama residents. Objectives and strategies developed to support achievement of this goal aim to remove barriers and build on programs that are already working in regions and institutions across the state.

Opportunities and Strategies

Affordability and Financial Resources

Among the barriers to access and success in educational attainment, affordability and financial resources rank at the top. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of reducing the cost of training and education and increasing tuition assistance, especially for individuals who do not qualify for grants but cannot afford tuition on their own. In an online survey of a sample of Alabama residents, the cost of tuition, books, and housing was the most frequently named barrier to pursuing or completing a post-secondary degree. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of educating students and families about student loans and debt management. Stakeholders suggested this information is needed at many points along the educational pipeline to assist families and students who are in high school or adult learners seeking to return to education and training programs.

Alabama benefits from several ongoing programs and initiatives that are already working to promote tuition assistance for Alabama residents. Examples include Cash for College, an initiative that encourages Alabama high schools to rally around Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, and Achieve Alabama, a program that helps connect students with schools and scholarship opportunities that fit their needs.



BEST PRACTICE: Cash for College <http://cashforcollegealabama.org/>

Cash for College, a program of Alabama Possible, encourages Alabama high schools to rally around FAFSA completion. The FAFSA is required for any student seeking federal and state financial aid, including grants and loans in all colleges. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 9 out of 10 students who complete a FAFSA attend college the following fall. The Cash for College dashboard reflects an improvement rate in FAFSA completions of 7 percent, which is the fourth highest increase in the nation according to the National College Access Network.

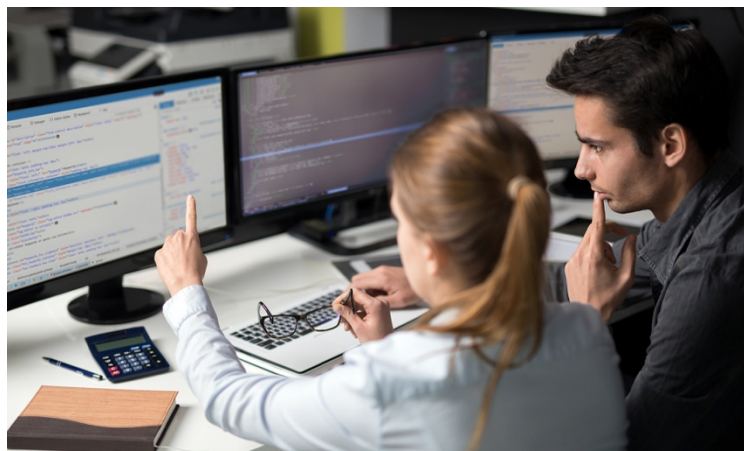
SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

- **Provide education about financial aid, personal finance, and debt management for students, families, and job seekers.**
- **Develop strategies to support affordability of education and training.**

Transportation, Childcare, and Other Primary Barriers

Beyond affordability and financial resources, there are many other barriers that prevent access and success in post-secondary educational attainment. According to stakeholders, the lack of affordable transportation, quality and affordable childcare, and family healthcare are significant barriers to access. They report that financial barriers, especially for single mothers, often stem from family-related issues such as the need for childcare or the need to stay home with a family member.

Stakeholders report that while these issues were often time-limited and episodic, the lack of an emergency fund to bridge the gap resulted in the student failing to complete an education or training program.



Other barriers named by stakeholders included a lack of broadband access and a lack of flexibility in course schedules. Stakeholders advocated for more flexible course schedules, virtual learning opportunities, and convenient locations of education and training centers.

Stakeholders emphasized that these barriers can be more pronounced for historically underserved populations

and in rural areas. While the attainment rate for working age Alabama residents is 43 percent, the attainment rate for certain populations can be as much as 20 percent lower than the overall rate. While some barriers contributing to these disparities have been well-researched and studied, others may require ongoing research and analysis. Historic and socioeconomic barriers such as family dynamics, careers that have been historically closed to women and/or minorities, social and emotional impacts of intergenerational poverty, and poverty rates for single mothers and their children are examples of issues that may require additional study.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Identify barriers to access and success, such as transportation, family healthcare, and childcare, and develop innovative and creative programs to address those barriers.

Navigation and Support

In considering education and training opportunities, many Alabama residents face the challenge of adding post-secondary educational attainment to an already difficult balance of work and home life. Barriers frequently named by survey respondents included balancing education, work, and home life.

According to stakeholders, case management and assistance navigating educational pathways and opportunities are key opportunities to help individuals manage the balance between education, work, and home life. Stakeholders pointed to the need for interpersonal support through strategies such as developing plans and programs to ensure students do not drop out of programs, providing mentors for students, and supporting transitions along educational and training pathways.

Stakeholders noted that career coaches and school counselors are providing some support in this area and could serve as a model for development of more robust case management and navigation

services. There are a number of other student success and navigation programs across the state, and successful models should be replicated at all levels of education and training.

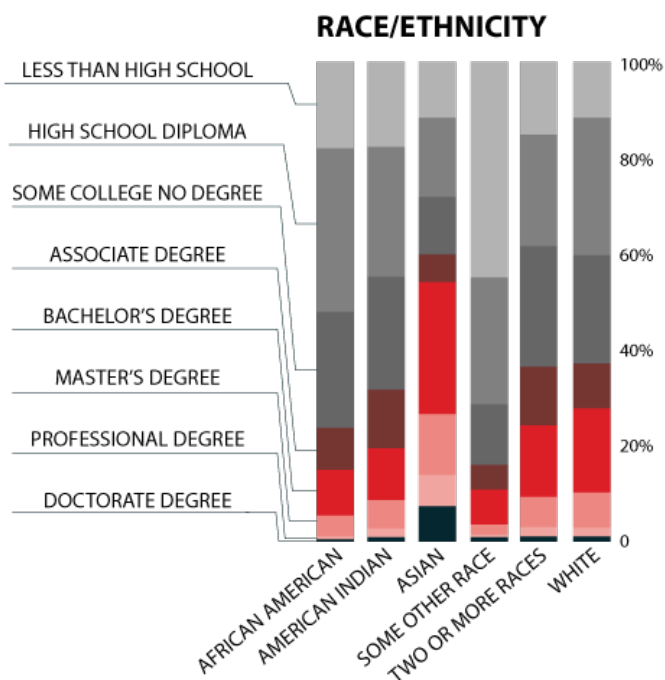
SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Develop student success services and navigation programs at all levels of education and training.

Equitable Access

The Lumina Foundation's *A Stronger Nation* report indicates that from a national perspective there is a persistent gap in attainment between learners who are Hispanic, African-American, and American Indian and their white peers. Alabama's Educational Attainment Dashboard reveals similar attainment gaps.

Opportunities exist to ensure equitable access and support for first-generation college students. Thirteen percent of survey respondents are pursuing a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized certificate. Of those respondents, 40 percent will be the first member of their family to complete a post-secondary degree or certificate. In the same survey, 22 percent of respondents are interested in a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized certificate. Of those respondents, 40 percent would be the first member of their family to complete a post-secondary degree or certificate.



Promoting equitable access and success – including careers that have historically been closed to women, such as manufacturing, construction, and skilled trades – will require a clear focus on at-risk and underserved populations. There are a number of programs working to address equitable access to education and training programs.



BEST PRACTICE: Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

<http://old.jag.org/alabama/>

In the 2018-2019 school year, Alabama will operate 25 JAG programs serving 48 high schools and more than 1,000 at-risk students in grades 9-12. The JAG model consists of a comprehensive set of services

that applies a holistic approach to assisting students. The components include: classroom instruction, competency-based curriculums, adult mentoring, advisement and support, student-led leadership development, job and post-secondary education placement services, 12-month follow-up services, and an accountability system. Data from Alabama’s 2016 graduating class indicated a 99.7 percent graduation rate and 98 percent of those graduates experienced a positive outcome (i.e., employed, in the military, or pursuing a post-secondary education).

SUCCESS PLUS **OBJECTIVE**

- **Develop strategies to ensure equity of access and support for populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment, including disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.**
- **Promote access to education and training for individuals in the corrections system, including those seeking pardon or parole.**
- **Promote access to education and training for veterans.**

Online Tools

In addition to strengthening resources and developing programs and strategies to support individuals and equitable access, Alabama must make information about these resources and tools easily accessible and available to all residents. Online tools related to access and success should be developed and publicized within the AlabamaWorks! website and in concert with awareness efforts across the state.

SUCCESS PLUS **OBJECTIVE**

Develop online tools to support access and success and share via website.



Target Outcomes

Preliminary target metrics and outcomes that will support progress in the Access and Success priority include:

- **Increase in enrollment**
- **Increase in completions**
- **Increase in FAFSA and tuition assistance applications**
- **Decreased gaps in enrollment and completions for low-income and minority populations**
- **Decrease in perceived barriers as measured by statewide survey**



PATHWAYS

Success Plus Goal

The Pathways goal is to define pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs. Programs, curriculum, and guidance along pathways support success, achievement, and opportunities for continuing education.

Overview

The Success Plus plan outlines an ambitious goal to create well-defined pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs. This will require that programs, curriculum, and guidance along the educational and training pipeline are strong at every level and aligned with the high-demand jobs and the needs of business and industry in the state. Achieving this will require both statewide and regionally-focused approaches. Objectives and strategies developed to support achievement of this goal aim to build on a number of programs and initiatives that are already working in the state and put in place tools and support along those pathways.

Opportunities and Strategies

Linking Education, Training, and High-Demand Jobs

Alabama has many strong education and training agencies, institutions, and programs, as well as a growing economy with job opportunities in high-demand fields. The opportunity for Alabama is to strengthen the link between education, training, and jobs through clearly defined pathways. Stakeholders in every region of the state named pathways to college and careers as a top priority.

Survey respondents see a relationship between a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree and a good job and/or a better quality of life:

- **81 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree is essential for getting a good job**

- **86 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that having a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree leads to a better quality of life**
- **92 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that a good job is essential to having a high quality of life**

The opportunity for Alabama is to build on the public’s understanding of the relationship between post-secondary attainment, a good job, and a better quality of life.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Design and communicate clear pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs.

Curriculum and Instruction

Developing a strong curriculum geared toward industry need and ensuring there are enough well-prepared teachers and instructors to teach this curriculum are key opportunities for the state. This will require that there are adequate resources to support curriculum instruction.

CTE and Dual Enrollment

Alabama’s CTE and dual-enrollment programs are strengthening the pipeline from high school to college and careers. The high return on investment of both programs was cited by stakeholders as evidence of the programs’ success. Stakeholders identified CTE and dual enrollment as top priorities and highlighted the need to expand these programs to include more CTE classes in K-12, more financial resources for CTE and dual enrollment, and excellent teachers for both programs. Stakeholders also identified a need for promoting a positive image of CTE statewide.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Expand CTE and dual-enrollment programs across the state and invest in training excellent teachers for these programs.

Work-Based Learning

Alabama’s work-based learning programs – including apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education programs – are providing a strong foundation for students to make the school-to-work transition. Stakeholders said apprenticeships and internships in particular give students critical exposure to business and industry environments. Stakeholders also named innovative work-based learning programs – including simulated workplace environments – as assets. Work-based learning programs also support strong partnerships between education, employers, and the community.



BEST PRACTICE: Apprenticeship Alabama

<http://www.apprenticeshipalabama.org/>

The mission of Apprenticeship Alabama (AA) is to ensure business and industry have the tools needed to develop an industry-driven Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program for its citizens. Apprenticeship Alabama stands by the rigorous combination of industry-specific, on-the-job training, and classroom theory taught over a one to four-year period. Apprentices receive a progressive wage, giving them an earn while you learn training experience that specifically meets a company's workforce needs. Most importantly, upon completion of the program, the apprentice will have a transportable credential that will increase high-wage earning potential. Industry focused sectors include healthcare, construction/carpentry, information technology, distribution/transportation/logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

- **Expand work-based learning programs across the state.**
- **Expand apprenticeship opportunities for youth and adults.**



Life and Employment Skills

Life and employment skills (or soft skills) are an important component of curriculum designed to meet industry and employer needs. Through the Alabama Skills Gap Survey, the Alabama Department of Labor has strong data to support alignment of curriculum around life and employment skills with industry need. This data aligns with stakeholder emphasis on the importance of these skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, problem-solving, relationship skills, time management, punctuality, drug-free workplace, resume preparation, and interview skills. Programs such as *Ready to Work* can be built upon to develop and implement life and employment skills curriculum at multiple levels.



BEST PRACTICE: Ready to Work <https://alabamareadytowork.org/about-rtw/>

Alabama's Ready to Work (RTW) program, operated by the Alabama Community College System in cooperation with AIDT, provides a career pathway for individuals with limited education and employment experience. RTW's workplace environment provides trainees the entry-level skills required for employment with most businesses and industries in Alabama. Training is provided at no cost to participants. The RTW sites are selected on a priority basis according to economic need and the college's demonstrated ability to ensure effective program operations and services. RTW curriculum is set to standards cited by employers throughout the state and to the skills cited by the U. S. Department of Labor.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Integrate life and employment skills in curriculum and training at multiple levels.

Credentialing

Credentialing is promoting career readiness at secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as for current members of the workforce, and is offered by a range of entities and in a variety of fields and industries. Stakeholders said technical-skill credentialing in high school and opportunities for up-training of adult learners are examples of how credentialing is working.

Industry-recognized certificates can also support equity of access for individuals. As part of the planning process, the Attainment Committee in partnership with the AWC began to develop a framework for defining credentials of value. The strategic plan recommends building on this work in the objective outlined below.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

Develop a formal process for establishing and evaluating high-quality credentials driven by the needs of business and industry on an ongoing basis.



Career Coaching, Coordinating, and Planning

Alabama must consider strategies and resources that help expose and direct students toward high-demand career pathways. Stakeholders said this includes both assessments/exploration, goal-setting, and planning for college and career, as well as interpersonal guidance through career coaches, school counselors, and peer mentors.

Stakeholders report difficulty getting the right student on the right track. At the same time, they report career coaches are providing critical support for students to learn about and explore career opportunities. Stakeholders named a wide variety of roles career coaches play, including serving as a contact person for students and parents, organizing industry tours and field trips, building partnerships to promote industry involvement in schools, and assessing and developing interest in career paths. Stakeholders report career coaches and school counselors are overextended in their efforts to support every student in this important step. They emphasized the importance of increasing the number of career coaches in the state. Stakeholders also identified a need for career coordinators. This role would be at the post-secondary level and would help ensure strong transitions between education and training and high-demand jobs.

Building awareness of resources and support for career coaching, coordinating, and planning is critical. Fifty-three percent of survey respondents were not aware that public high schools in Alabama have a career coach that provides support for students. There is also an opportunity to increase awareness of career centers. In the same online survey, 40 percent of respondents were not aware of Alabama Career Centers or the career planning support they provide.

SUCCESS PLUS OBJECTIVE

- **Strengthen the network of well-trained career coaches and career coordinators at all levels of education and training.**
- **Strengthen and expand the use of statewide career planning tools for all levels of education and training.**

The Alabama College and Career Exploration Tool

The Governor's Office will partner with the Alabama Workforce Council, Alabama State Department of Education, Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Alabama Community College System, four-year colleges and universities, and Alabama Office of Information Technology to develop an online college and career exploration dashboard. The Alabama College and Career Exploration Tool will allow students to compare and contrast combinations of careers by comparing education requirements, debt burden for education, and chances of employment.



Target Outcomes

Preliminary target metrics and outcomes that will support progress in the Pathways priority include:

- **Decrease the need for post-secondary remediation courses**
- **Increase in CTE/Dual Enrollment participation**
- **Increase in work-based learning participation**
- **Increase in the use of career planning tools**
- **Increase in career coaches /**
- **Decrease ratio of students to career coaches**
- **Increase in certificate and credential attainment**

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Success Plus Goal

The Leadership and Collaboration goal is for partners at the state, regional, and local levels to work together to support efforts aimed at increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.

Overview

The Success Plus plan recognizes that strong leadership and the concerted and collaborative effort of many individuals, organizations, and agencies will be required to make the plan a reality.

Objectives and strategies focus on a clear implementation structure and process, engaging leaders and stakeholders at the regional level, and continuous learning around best practices. In listening sessions held across the state, stakeholders reported growing commitment, collaboration, and

leadership around post-secondary educational attainment initiatives at the statewide, regional, and local levels.

Opportunities and Strategies

Implementation and Collaboration

The strategic planning process leveraged and strengthened the capacity and readiness among many partners and stakeholders to move the focus on increasing attainment levels from conversation to action. In addition, the Attainment Committee maintained a strong focus on implementation readiness throughout the planning process. The committee recommends that any implementation process should include action planning, regular review and assessment, capturing of ongoing work, and foundational study.

In addition to a structure and process for implementation, a proactive system of engagement of partners at the state and local levels will be critical to in increasing attainment. At the state level, collaboration is critical to implementation of the strategic plan, developing policy and funding to support implementation, creating clear strategies for reporting progress, and posting attainment data through publicly-available dashboards. Engagement of business and industry is critical to aligning program design with industry need, ensuring credentials and certificates are valuable to employers, and creating strong internship and apprenticeship opportunities.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
	Develop a collaborative structure and process to support implementation of the strategic plan and develop the action steps, timelines, champions, resources, and metrics for each objective. Engage education, employers, government, and community partners in this collective impact model.

Regional Leadership

Building trust is a critical first step at the state and local levels. Alabama’s seven regional workforce councils are providing focused support for attainment and workforce development. These councils have dedicated staff and support, which is a key advantage for the council structure. Stakeholders believe that connecting businesses to the education system at the local level is an example of how collaboration can strengthen attainment efforts. Stakeholders recommended leveraging regional workforce councils as a key resource in implementation.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage regional leaders and workforce councils and their membership to support implementation at the local level and ensure education and training leads to jobs for individuals.• Integrate attainment goals into regional workforce council strategic plans.

Resources

Implementation of the strategic plan will require dedicated resources in a number of areas, including policy, funding, and facilities. While many stakeholders identified short- and long-term funding in general as a needed resource, others named specific initiatives or programs that require funding such as CTE, dual enrollment, simulated workplaces, credentialing, career coaches, more teachers and teacher training, marketing for programs, and tuition-free programs. Examples of funding support included more funding but also better coordination of federal, state, and local resources. Stakeholders noted an equity lens on funding (for example, more funding in rural areas or for at-risk populations) is important. Stakeholders said that improved training facilities could be a key resource in increasing post-secondary educational attainment.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
	Evaluate current resources and funding related to educational attainment efforts, and identify and commit resources (funding, expertise, time) to initiatives identified in the strategic plan based on measurable outcomes.

Best Practices

Utilizing best practices is critical to developing a best-in-class implementation plan for attainment. A number of best practices are highlighted in this report, and additional examples of best practices identified during the planning process are included (Appendix C). Collecting and creating learning communities around best practices should continue throughout plan implementation.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
	Identify best practices within Alabama and across other states and replicate these models.

ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Success Plus Goal

The Assessment and Continuous Improvement goal is to ensure progress toward Alabama’s goal for post-secondary educational attainment is tracked and shared regularly, and adjustments are made to the plan and strategies to ensure success.



Overview

It is critical to measure and track progress toward reaching Alabama's attainment goal. The Success Plus plan recognizes that data, assessment, and continuous improvement ensure that priorities, goals, and objectives outlined in the strategic plan are met. Objectives and strategies developed to support assessment and continuous improvement build on leadership and collaboration and integrate data as a key tool in implementation.



Data

The Attainment Committee's strategic planning process included a strong focus on building a data-informed plan. The committee sought input from experts in the public and private sectors on how best to collect, report, and analyze data available through national and state databases related to education and workforce in Alabama. The resulting Educational Attainment Data Dashboard has informed the Success Plus plan.

The Attainment Committee believes it is important to strengthen the state's data collection and reporting by linking existing data across state agencies and connecting existing silos of information that currently exist within all state agencies. Alabama's inability to link existing data is a barrier to promoting and measuring any progress that is made toward increasing the state's attainment level. Through federal grants obtained by the Department of Commerce and Department of Labor, the state is in the process of developing a statewide longitudinal data system that will connect existing

education and workforce data from preschool through the workforce. Once implemented, the system will eliminate the silos of data that currently exist across the state and link providers along the career pathway. This will help the state improve education and workforce outcomes for its residents by evaluating the effectiveness of programs and initiatives focused on increasing attainment and the overall skill of Alabama’s workers.

The Attainment Committee believes the data system will help the state align education and training programs with the current and anticipated needs of the state’s workforce and inform decision-making of all workforce partners based on consistent and real-time data. Information collected by the data system will be limited and appropriate to advancing education and workforce achievement, and data privacy protections should be implemented to ensure that no personally identifiable information is ever disseminated.

By investing in a data system, Alabama will increase its ability to identify curriculum gaps, enact data-driven policies, increase transparency, provide students and parents with better information about education pathways, evaluate the effectiveness of career and workforce programs, evaluate dual enrollment and on-the-job training programs, and identify current and projected skills gaps in the workforce. Most importantly, it will allow Alabama to use an industry, operations-management approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its programs along the education supply chain and maximize the impact of taxpayer dollars.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a dashboard to track and share progress for the strategic plan on a regular basis.• Strengthen data collection and reporting related to education and workforce outcomes by linking existing data across state agencies.• Analyze data and use the outcomes to continuously improve programs, recommend funding allocation, and propose future budget needs on a regular basis.	

High-Demand Jobs

The Success Plus plan aims to create clear pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs. High-demand jobs are generally considered to be jobs that represent a demonstrated need by employers in Alabama. As the economic landscape is changing and evolving rapidly, the state must understand, identify, and promote high-demand jobs on an ongoing basis.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
<p>Develop a process for forecasting high-demand jobs at the state and regional levels annually.</p>	

Attainment Targets

The Success Plus plan drives toward the goal of adding 500,000 high-skilled employees to Alabama's workforce by 2025. Achieving this goal will take the work of many partners from organizations, agencies, and institutions across the state. Regional workforce councils will play a critical role in convening stakeholders to address the unique needs of their communities and developing localized strategies. The Success Plus plan encourages development of educational and credential targets for individual entities to support overall achievement of the statewide goal.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
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Promote development of educational and credential attainment targets across the state that are aligned with the strategic plan.
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Annual Plan Review and Update

The Success Plus plan reflects data available in 2017 and the priorities of stakeholders at a moment in time. As progress is made toward the plan's objectives, priorities and resources may shift. In order to integrate successes, accomplishments, and changing environmental dynamics into the plan, the plan should be reviewed and updated regularly to remain current and well-informed.

SUCCESS PLUS	OBJECTIVE
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Formally review and update the strategic plan annually.
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APPENDIX

A. Stakeholder Insights Report: Listening Sessions

B. Stakeholder Insights Report: Online Survey

C. Best Practice Examples

D. Preliminary Action Steps and Ongoing Work

Appendix A. Stakeholder Insights Report: Listening Sessions

1. Overview

The Alabama Workforce Council Statewide Educational Attainment Committee employed a mixed methods approach of integrating quantitative and qualitative data to gain knowledge, inform plan development, and create solutions. This mixed methods approach is considered best practice. In addition to assessing the existing environment through analysis of quantitative data, the Attainment Committee sought to gather the perspectives of key stakeholders across Alabama, including individuals and organizations involved with education, business, industry, government, workforce development, economic development, and community partners.

2. Methodology

Qualitative data was collected through listening sessions with members and community stakeholders of the seven regional workforce councils. Approximately 300 stakeholders participated in listening sessions to identify opportunities, strengths, challenges, and priorities for increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama. Clarus Consulting Group facilitated the listening sessions between October – December 2017.

Each listening session included introductions of participants and a presentation that informed participants about the background of the statewide educational attainment strategic plan and the importance of stakeholder input to development of the plan. Lead facilitators then provided an overview of the listening session format:

- Discussion Topics: Three non-directive, open-ended questions prompted discussion and encouraged dynamic and open conversation.
- Discussion Groups: When listening sessions included more than 15 people, participants separated into small groups for discussion of each question. Participants moved to new groups for each question so they could benefit from listening to a mix of perspectives.
- Facilitation: A facilitator led each discussion group, introduced each discussion question, guided discussion to ensure it stayed on topic, and took notes on key ideas from conversations.

The following three questions were asked during each listening session:

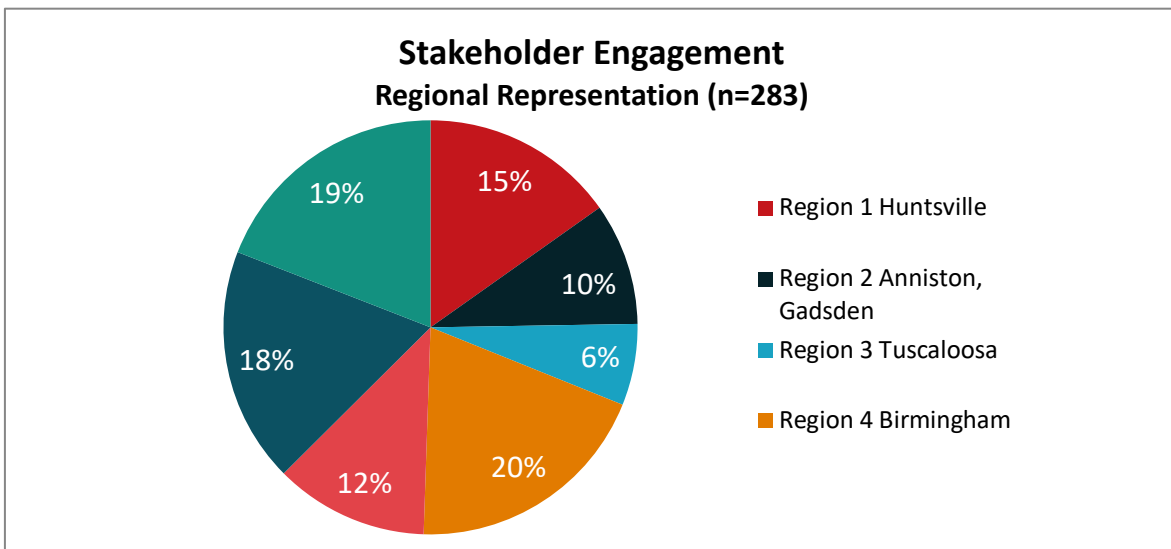
1. When we are successful at reaching our goal to increase educational attainment in Alabama, what will be true about our state in the future? What will be true about your organization?
2. When you think about educational attainment today:
 - a. What is working well in this region and across the state? What assets and resources are in place we can build on?
 - b. What are the biggest challenges or barriers to educational attainment in this region and across the state?
3. What priorities must we address in order to increase educational attainment in Alabama?

- a. In other words, what are the most important things we can do to increase educational attainment in Alabama?
- b. What resources will we need to accomplish these efforts?

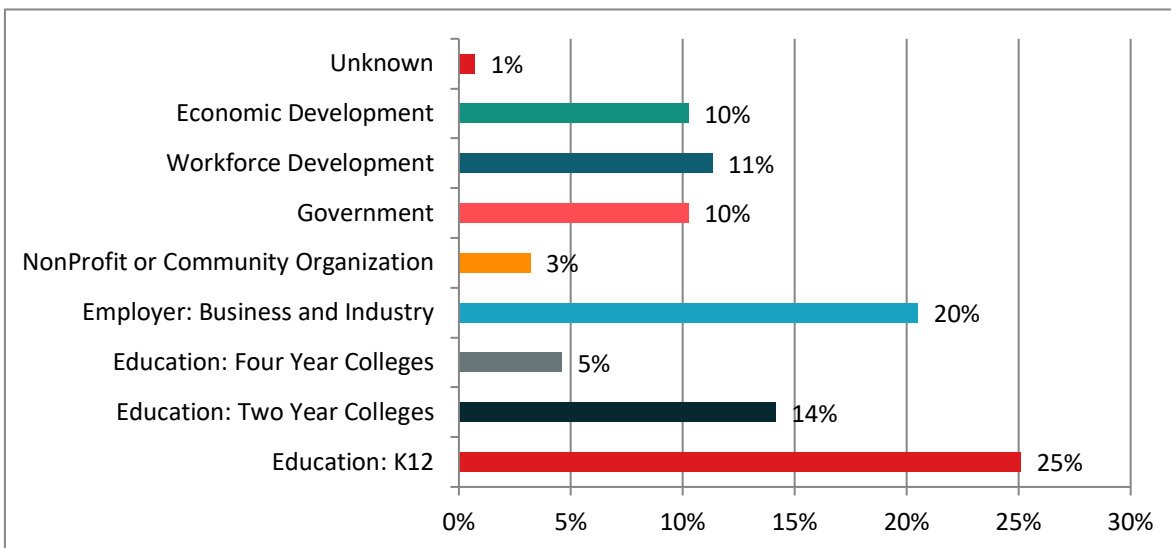
Each listening session closed with facilitators providing brief summaries of the highlights and key points covered in the discussion groups, an overview of next steps in the planning process, and opportunities to provide further input into the planning process.

3. Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholders engaged through listening sessions represented all of the seven workforce council regions and a range of organizations, industries, and sectors. An overview of stakeholders engaged is below.



1 Regions represented in listening sessions, including locations of listening sessions



2 Organizations, industries, and sectors represented in listening sessions

4. Stakeholder Insights

A summary of stakeholder feedback from listening sessions organized by question topic is below. The summary includes key findings and themes common across listening sessions.

A. Key Observations

Three key observations about Alabama's existing post-secondary educational attainment environment provide important context for the strategic plan.

1. **Window of Opportunity.** *Today presents a unique opportunity to refocus and align efforts related to post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.* At the statewide, regional, and local levels, stakeholders report growing commitment, collaboration, and leadership around attainment initiatives.
2. **Regional Workforce Councils.** *Regional workforce councils offer valuable infrastructure for post-secondary educational attainment efforts.* While each region is unique in terms of its opportunities and challenges, mix of urban and rural areas, and industry clusters served, the common structure of the regional workforce councils – including each region's ability to engage key business, industry, education, and government and community partners – could provide an important template and resource for implementing the strategic plan.
3. **Equitable Access and Success.** *To ensure every Alabama resident possesses the skills and knowledge to succeed, the state should focus on populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment opportunities.* This includes disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.

B. Vision

Stakeholders articulated a vision for individuals, organizations, and the state that will result from reaching Alabama's attainment goal, including:

- Quality of life and opportunities for all
- Positive perception of the state
- Ability to attract and retain business and industry
- Ability to attract and retain talent
- Job and career readiness in high school
- Awareness of pathways for success
- Resources to support attainment initiatives

C. Strengths, Assets, and Resources

Stakeholders identified a number of key strengths and assets Alabama can build on as it works to close the post-secondary educational attainment gap.

1. **Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Dual Enrollment.** *Key Finding: Alabama's CTE and dual-enrollment programs are preparing students for college and careers and strengthening the pipeline from high school to college and careers.* Stakeholders cited the high return on investment of both programs as evidence of the programs' success.

Stakeholders said there is an opportunity to continue increasing funding, education, and awareness about the programs to ensure continued success and maximize benefit.

2. **Work-Based Learning. Key Finding: Alabama's work-based learning programs – including apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education programs – are providing a strong foundation for students to make the school-to-work transition.** Stakeholders said apprenticeships and internships in particular give students and workers critical exposure to business and industry environments. Stakeholders named innovative work-based learning programs, including simulated workplace environments, as assets. Stakeholders said work-based learning programs support partnerships among education, employers, and the community.
3. **Career Fairs and Expos. Key Finding: Well-coordinated career fairs and expos are exposing students and workers to career opportunities through events and providing critical networking opportunities among students, workers, educators, administrators, and employers.** Stakeholders most commonly cited the *Worlds of Work* and *Worlds of Opportunity* programs geared toward eighth graders and organized by regional workforce councils as key examples of these events' success. They also said similar events hosted by Alabama Community College System and Alabama Department of Labor are effective.
4. **Credentialing. Key Finding: Credentialing offered by a range of entities and in a variety of fields and industries is promoting career readiness at the secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as for current members of the workforce.** Stakeholders said technical-skill credentialing in K12 and opportunities for up-training of adult learners are examples of the effectiveness of credentialing. Stakeholders said there is an opportunity to better define high-quality certificates and credentials and to ensure they are tied to employer needs.
5. **Career Coaches. Key Finding: Career coaches and guidance counselors are providing critical support that enables students to learn about and explore college and career opportunities.** Stakeholders named a variety of important roles career coaches and guidance counselors play including serving as a contact person for students and parents, organizing industry tours, building partnerships to promote industry involvement in schools, and assessing and developing student interest in college and career pathways. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of increasing the number of career coaches in the state.
6. **Collaboration. Key Finding: Partnerships among education and employers are growing, and where the partnerships are strong, they are accelerating efforts to increase post-secondary educational attainment.** Stakeholders noted partnerships are increasing and suggested there are opportunities to continue building collaboration among key partners at the statewide and local levels.
7. **Higher Education. Key Finding: Institutions of higher education, including the Alabama Community College System, four-year colleges and universities, and graduate schools, are providing critical infrastructure and services related to post-secondary educational attainment in the state.** Stakeholders highlighted the importance of community colleges in providing general education to young adult and adult learners and supporting workforce development initiatives such as apprenticeship programs, short-term training programs to

meet industry need, and other basic skills training. Stakeholders said many institutions of higher education have strong partnerships with secondary education and are assets to attainment efforts.

8. **Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT).** *Key Finding: AIDT, which serves as one of Alabama's economic development workforce training agencies, is providing critical infrastructure and training services that promote and increase educational attainment in the state.* Stakeholders said AIDT enrollment is high and that AIDT develops and supports strong public-private partnerships that benefit workers and employers throughout the state.
9. **Regional Workforce Councils.** *Key Finding: Alabama's seven regional workforce councils are providing focused support for attainment and workforce development at the local level.* Stakeholders said regional workforce councils are strong and agreed that having dedicated staff and support for the councils is a key advantage for the state.
10. **Career Tech Centers and Career Centers.** *Key Finding: Alabama's career tech centers across the state provide key space and resources for education and training programs, while Alabama's career centers help connect individuals to job opportunities.* Stakeholders said facilities and programs including career tech centers and career centers are providing critical infrastructure for education, training, and connecting individuals to job opportunities.

D. Challenges, Barriers, and Opportunities

Stakeholders identified a number of challenges, barriers, and opportunities Alabama must address as it works to close the attainment gap.

1. Awareness. *Key Finding: The public is not aware of the full range of post-secondary educational attainment pathways available to individuals and the career opportunities to which they lead.*

- **Public Perception.** Stakeholders reported the public largely perceives that a four-year degree is the primary route to career success. They noted that lack of understanding of the full range of college and career pathways available can lead to misperception and stigma around trade professions and career and technical education.
- **Students and Families.** Stakeholders said students and families often lack awareness of the full range of college and career pathways available to students. They said this included a gap in knowledge about existing high-wage jobs and resources available to students in pursuing various educational pathways that lead to those jobs. Stakeholders said they believe there is an opportunity for earlier exposure to college and career pathways and opportunities.
- **Teachers and Administrators.** Stakeholders said teachers and administrators often lack awareness of the full range of college and career pathways available to students and workers. Stakeholders reported that increasing teacher and administrator awareness of career opportunities, and the pathways that lead to them, will be critical to increasing attainment.

2. Access. *Key Finding: Certain populations experience challenges in terms of access to education and training opportunities. These barriers to access include a lack of funding, transportation, family healthcare, childcare, and broadband service.*

- **Funding.** Stakeholders reported that the cost of education and training and lack of tuition assistance can be barriers for individuals. Stakeholders said lack of funding for competitive compensation for teachers, non-credit programs, and resources for underserved communities and school systems can be barriers at the program level.
- **Transportation.** Stakeholders reported lack of transportation to and from education and training is a key barrier, especially in rural areas. Stakeholders reported the number and location of education and training facilities can contribute to this challenge.
- **Childcare and Family Healthcare.** Stakeholders reported lack of quality and affordable childcare is a barrier to post-secondary educational attainment, especially for women and single heads of household. Stakeholders reported financial barriers, especially for single mothers, often stem from family-related issues such as the need to stay home with a family member who is ill. Stakeholders said while this was often time limited and episodic, lack of an emergency fund to bridge the gap resulted in a student failing to complete an education or training program.
- **Broadband.** Stakeholders said lack of access to broadband and other technology is a barrier to educational attainment, especially in rural areas. Stakeholders said one way broadband access would support access to education and training is through virtual learning opportunities.
- **Significant Barriers to Access.** Stakeholders reported some populations experience significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment, including disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.

3. Social and Economic Factors. Key Finding: Substance abuse, soft skills, work ethic, and a lack of financial incentives to work can be barriers to post-secondary educational attainment.

- **Substance Abuse.** Stakeholders reported substance abuse can be a barrier to building a strong and successful workforce. They said the inability of some current and potential employees to pass drug tests is a significant and widespread challenge.
- **Soft Skills and Work Ethic.** Stakeholders reported lack of work ethic, life skills, and soft skills are key challenges to building a strong workforce, especially for young adults. Stakeholders reported lack of role models and mentors to support good work ethic and life skills contributes to this challenge.
- **Financial Incentives.** Stakeholders reported that lack of availability of good-paying jobs and jobs that offer career advancement can be a barrier to attainment. Stakeholders said the perception and reality that some jobs do not pay enough to incentivize people to seek education and training and go to work can be a challenge.

4. Collaboration. Key Finding: Where collaboration and partnerships are strong, efforts to increase post-secondary educational attainment and workforce readiness are yielding results. There are opportunities across the state to continue to grow and expand collaboration and partnerships.

- **Industry Engagement.** Stakeholders reported engagement and buy-in from industry is essential to promoting attainment, including aligning curriculum with industry need, ensuring certificates and credentials are valuable to employers, and creating meaningful internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **State Level Collaboration.** Stakeholders emphasized trust, alignment, and collaboration at the state level among education, employers, economic development, and workforce development is essential. Stakeholders reported better alignment at the state level is needed along the education pipeline and between education and business and industry.
- **Local Level Collaboration.** Stakeholders said collaboration at the local level among education, employers, economic development, and workforce development is essential. Stakeholders focused on the importance of regional workforce councils to collaboration and cited connecting local businesses with education systems as an example of effective collaboration.

5. Curriculum and Instruction. Key Finding: Lack of resources for teaching, aligning, and supporting individuals along a college or career pathway, and developing strong curriculum geared toward industry need are barriers.

- **Resources for Teaching.** Stakeholders reported a need for more teachers, CTE instructors, career coaches, guidance counselors, and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Stakeholders reported a need for more resources to support increasing knowledge related to attainment pathways and high-demand job opportunities.
- **Student Experience.** Stakeholders said challenges aligning students to a college or career pathway, and supporting that student along the pathway, can be a barrier to attainment. Stakeholders said career coaches and counselors are overextended in their efforts to support every student in this important step. Stakeholders said lack of flexibility in school schedules and available electives can be a barrier to attainment.
- **Curriculum.** Stakeholders said curriculum can be enhanced to support educational attainment, alignment with industry need, and general employability. Stakeholders reported a need for soft skills and life skills taught at all levels of education and training, curriculum designed to meet industry and employer needs, and adequate time and resources for teachers to focus on CTE.

6. Policy and Data. Key Finding: Education policy can be better aligned with attainment efforts. The lack of reliable data is a barrier to promoting and tracking attainment.

- **Policy.** Stakeholders reported a need to better align education policy and attainment efforts, including for CTE, dual enrollment, and work-based learning programs. Stakeholders reported a need for consistency, transparency, and accountability along the educational pipeline including in tracking units across all levels of education and training and in testing goals and expectations.

- **Data.** Stakeholders said more reliable data from preschool through the workforce could help measure progress toward the state’s attainment goal, evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and inform good decision-making.

E. Priorities

Stakeholders across workforce council regions identified a set of priorities for increasing post-secondary educational attainment. These priorities have been incorporated into the five priorities, goals, and objectives outlined in the Success Plus plan. The five priorities are Awareness, Access and Success, Pathways, Leadership and Collaboration, and Assessment and Continuous Improvement.

Appendix B. Stakeholder Insights Report: Online Survey

1. About the Survey and Its Respondents

A. Survey Objectives

- Capture a sample of perspectives and opinions related to post-secondary educational attainment both broadly and personally – this includes their personal perspective as well as their perspective on their child/children's post-secondary educational attainment if a parent.
- Increase awareness of the AlabamaWorks! website, Alabama Career Centers, and high school career coaches.

B. Using Survey Findings

- Provide a supplement to listening session findings in order to inform current planning effort.
- Non-representative sample limits ability to make valid inferences about the larger population.
- Degree of utility to inform communication, increase awareness, and develop programs.

C. Survey Structure

- Sample Type: Non-representative (non-probability), convenience sample
- Platform: Online (SurveyGizmo)
- Anonymity: Anonymous responses
- Length: 56 single- and multi-select questions, utilized question display logic
- Duration: Estimated 5-7 minutes to complete
- Closing: Redirected to AlabamaWorks! website upon completion
- Survey Period: Brief survey period, Jan. 9 to Feb. 2, 2018

D. Survey Distribution Strategy

- Emailed or made available online to: Parents of CTE students, Alabama Community College System adult education students, individuals seeking support from Alabama Career Centers, regional workforce councils' contacts, AlabamaWorks! homepage visitors, and some parents in public K12 system (limited distribution).

E. Survey Respondents

- Received 1,474 completed responses. Response count by question varied, because not all questions were required and display logic only presented relevant questions.
- Customized survey links for each survey group were distributed. The responses by link are included below. The link could have been shared with and used by other Alabama residents not in one of these groups. Link use:
 - o Parents of CTE Students = 712 responses
 - o ACCS Adult Education Students = 261
 - o Individuals Seeking Career Center Support = 246
 - o Access through AlabamaWorks! Website = 199
 - o Other (social media, direct link, etc.) = 56
- Table 1 below includes demographic information about survey respondents.

Table 1: Survey Respondent Demographic Information

Community Type (n = 1465)	Rural 40%	Suburban 31%	Urban 18%	Unsure 11%	
Alabama County (n = 1429)	Respondents live in 62 Alabama counties, with 22% of all respondents living in Morgan County.				
Age (n = 1471)	18-24 years 7%	25-34 years 16%	35-44 years 30%	45 – 54 years 25%	55+ years 19%
Race and Ethnicity (n = 1468)	White 72%	Black/African American 17%	Other 3%	American Indian/Alaska Native 1%	Asian 1%
Hispanic/Latino Origin (n = 1467)	4% of respondents are of Hispanic/Latino origin				
Employment Status (n = 1474)	Employed Full-Time 55%	Unemployed, Seeking Employment 16%	Employed Part-Time 13%	Self-Employed 4%	Homemaker 4%
	Retired 4%	Disabled and Unable to Work 2%	Unemployed, Not Seeking Employment 2%		
Annual Household Income	Less than \$25,000 22%	\$25,000 - 49,999 20%	\$50,000 – 74,999 13%	\$75,000 – 99,999 10%	More than \$100,000 23%
Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Advanced Degree 6%	Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree 42%	Associate’s Degree 10%	Some College but No Degree 14%	Industry-recognized Certificate 5%
	High School Diploma or GED 12%	Some High School but no Diploma 9%	Less than High School 3%		
Current Educational Pursuit	22% of respondents are currently pursuing a degree or certificate. Of those pursuing a degree, 39% are pursuing a high school diploma or GED. The remaining 61% are pursuing a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized certificate.				
Parent Status	63% are a parent or guardian of one or more children under the age of 19				
Veteran Status	8% of respondents are veterans				
Gender	Question only answered by portion of sample - 705 responses; Female: 61%, Male: 36%				

Note: Respondents could select “Prefer not to respond” for demographic questions. Therefore, the cumulative response rates for each demographic characteristic do not equal 100%. The number of responses per question varies as a small number of respondents did not provide a response to one or more demographic questions.

2. Observations and Takeaways

A. Access to Information and Resource Awareness

Key Takeaway: There are opportunities to improve access to and awareness of key resources related to post-secondary educational attainment.

- 26% of respondents do not have or are unsure if they have adequate access to the information and resources they need should they want to pursue a post-secondary degree or certificate.
- 26% of responding parents do not have or are unsure if they have adequate access to the information and resources they need should their child/children want to pursue a post-secondary degree or certificate.
- 55% of respondents were not aware of the AlabamaWorks! website and the information it provides.
- 40% of respondents were not aware of the Alabama Career Centers and the help they provide.
- 53% of respondents were not aware that public high schools in Alabama have a career coach that who provides support for students.
- 55% of respondents who are parents/guardians were not aware that public high schools in Alabama have a career coach who provides support for students.

B. General Opinions

Key Takeaway: Generally, respondents recognize the importance of having a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree. Table 2 below compares the responses of respondents with and without a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree.

Table 2: Importance of Post-Secondary Certificate, Credential, or Degree			
Response	All Responses	With Post-Secondary Attainment	Without Post-Secondary Attainment
Believe it is currently very important or important for adults in Alabama to have a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree	82% (1472 responses)	84% (914 responses)	77% (558 responses)
Believe it is more important in the future for adults in Alabama to have a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree	52% (1471 responses)	55% (912 responses)	47% (559 responses)

C. Characteristics of a Good Job

Key Takeaway: Respondents named benefits, wages, and opportunities for advancement as the top characteristics of a good job. The following characteristics of a good job were identified by 50% or more of respondents.

- 89% - Offers healthcare and other benefits
- 83% - Provides opportunities for advancement
- 83% - Offers a wage appropriate for my experience level, skills, and education
- 80% - Offers a wage that allows me to support my household
- 76% - Offers job security
- 67% - Allows me to only work one job to support my household
- 66% - Provides on-the-job training
- 55% - Is located near where I live
- Other responses include: provides interesting work, does not require me to frequently work overtime, safe working environment, flexible work schedules, and paid leave

D. Attainment, Jobs, and Quality of Life

Key Takeaway: Respondents see a relationship between the attainment of a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree, a good job, and/or a better quality of life.

- 81% of respondents agree or strongly agree that a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree is essential for getting a good job
- 86% of respondents agree or strongly agree that having a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree leads to a better quality of life
- 92% of respondents agree or strongly agree that a good job is essential to having a high quality of life

E. Attainment and Job Confidence

Key Takeaway: Respondents are most confident that a four-year degree can lead to a good job currently and for their children in the future. Tables 3 and 4 below show respondents' confidence in the relationship between a post-secondary degree and obtaining a good job.

Table 3: Post-Secondary Degrees and Confidence in Obtaining a Good Job					
Confidence that Having Only the Following Certificate, Credential, or Degree Can Lead to a Good Job	Not at All Confident	Somewhat Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Confident or Very Confident
High School Diploma or GED (1465 responses)	33%	39%	19%	9%	28%
Industry-recognized Certificate (1472 responses)	7%	42%	40%	12%	52%
Two-year Degree (Associate) (1472 responses)	6%	34%	45%	16%	61%
Four-year Degree (Bachelor's) (1474 responses)	4%	19%	46%	32%	78%

Table 4: Post-Secondary Degrees and Confidence in Children Obtaining a Good Job in the Future					
Confidence Your Child/Children Having Only the Following Certificate, Credential, or Degree Can Obtain a Good Job	Not at All Confident	Somewhat Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Confident or Very Confident
High School Diploma or GED (921 responses)	49%	31%	11%	9%	20%
Industry-recognized Certificate (920 responses)	12%	49%	28%	10%	38%
Two-year Degree (Associate) (918 responses)	8%	39%	41%	13%	54%
Four-year Degree (Bachelor's) (918 responses)	2%	15%	47%	35%	82%

F. Drivers of Attainment

Key Takeaway: The main drivers for pursuing or being interested in pursuing a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree are a desire to meet a personal goal and to obtain a good job.

- 13% of respondents are pursuing a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree. 40% of these respondents will be the first member of their family to complete a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree.
- 22% of respondents are interested in a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree. 40% of these respondents would be the first member of their family to complete a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree.

Table 5: Reasons for Pursuit of or Interest in a Post-Secondary Certificate, Credential, or Degree	
Reason for Pursuing A Degree or Certificate (Not HS or GED) (195 Responses)	Reason for Interest in Pursuing a Degree (Not HS or GED) (332 Responses)
To meet a personal goal (66%)	To meet a personal goal (58%)
To obtain a good job (45%)	To obtain a good job (40%)
To gain skills or knowledge needed for my current job (38%)	To transition to a new career (39%)
To transition to a new career (37%)	To gain skills or knowledge needed for my current job (30%)
To earn a promotion at my current employer (26%)	To earn a promotion at my current employer (28%)

Note: This table includes reasons selected by 25% or more of respondents. Additional reasons were identified.

G. Barriers to Attainment

Key Takeaway: The most frequently named barrier to completing or pursuing a post-secondary certificate, credential, or degree is the cost. Table 6 below lists the top barriers to completing or pursuing post-secondary attainment.

Table 6: Anticipated Barriers to Post-Secondary Educational Attainment			
What, if anything, may prevent you from completing the degree or certificate you are pursuing? (If Pursuing, not HS Degree or GED) (197 Responses)	What, if anything, is preventing you from pursuing a degree or certificate? (Not HS Degree or GED) (331 Responses)	Earlier in this survey, you indicated that you have earned some college credits but have not completed a degree or certificate. Why did you not complete a college degree or industry-recognized certificate? (138 responses)	What, if anything, do you believe might prevent your child/children from completing a post-secondary degree or certificate? (915 Responses)
Cost of tuition/books (37%)	Cost of tuition/books (63%)	Difficulty balancing work and school (53%)	Cost of tuition/books/housing (42%)
None, expect to complete (36%)	Difficulty balancing work and school (41%)	Difficulty balancing home life (providing care to family members) and school (43%)	Nothing is likely to prevent my child/children from completing a degree or certificate. (34%)
Difficulty balancing work and school (32%)	Difficulty balancing home life (providing care to family members) and school (38%)	Cost of tuition/books (38%)	Not enjoying school or studying (26%)
Difficulty balancing home life (providing care to family members) and school (29%)	Loss of income while in school (23%)	Loss of income while in school (17%)	Lack of individual work ethic or self-discipline (14%)
Loss of income while in school (24%)	Unsure if a degree/certificate will lead to a better job (12%)	Lack of support from family members (15%)	Difficulty balancing work and school (14%)
Takes too long to complete a degree/certificate (11%)	Unsure of degree/certificate program options (12%)	Lack of childcare (12%)	Difficulty passing classes (13%)
Difficulty passing classes (10%)	Unsure if a degree/certificate will lead to more income (10%)	Lack of support from employer (11%)	Unsure of degree/certificate program options (13%)
Note: This table includes barriers selected by 10% or more of respondents in each group. Additional barriers were identified.			Not completing high school (13%)

Appendix C. Best Practice Examples

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders and partners identified a number of best practices from Alabama and other states. Examples of these best practices organized by priority area are included below for reference as Alabama moves toward implementation of the Success Plus plan. As part of implementation, partners will continue to identify, learn from, and implement recognized best practices.

1. Awareness

Worlds of Opportunity, Worlds of Work, and Alabama Department of Labor Career Fairs

Worlds of Opportunity and Worlds of Work are annual career expo events geared toward eighth grade students that take place in all seven workforce council regions across the state. These events bring together partners from education, business, industry, and other key entities to create a dynamic and educational experience for students to learn about a range of career pathways and opportunities available in the region. In addition, the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) has hosted career fairs in each region for the current workforce population. One ADOL career fair held in Birmingham focused on disabled populations.

2. Access and Success

Cash for College

<http://cashforcollegealabama.org/>

Cash for College, a program of Alabama Possible, encourages Alabama high schools to rally around Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion. The FAFSA is required for any student seeking federal and state financial aid, including grants and loans in all colleges. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 9 of 10 students who complete a FAFSA attend college the following fall. The Cash for College dashboard reflects an improvement rate in FAFSA completions of 7 percent, which is the fourth highest increase in the nation according to the National College Access Network.

Freshman Encounter: e34 life at Lawson State Community College (Birmingham, Alabama)

http://www.lawsonstate.edu/discover_lscq/quality_enhancement_plan.aspx

Lawson State Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Freshman Encounter: e³4 life, is designed to equip, engage, and empower (e³) freshmen with skills and knowledge that will contribute to their success at Lawson State and provide effective engagement strategies to facilitate their success. The QEP has three components: The Freshman Academy (ORI101 Orientation Course for incoming students); the FAME instructors (Faculty Academy Master Educators) who teach the ORI101 classes, and the SPACE Center (a multi-dimensional Student Services support center). The three-pronged initiative assists students in making the academic and social transition to college and is integrated in the college's mission, vision, and goals. The QEP is designed to help students learn to better navigate the scope and depth of what a full college experience has to offer; improve student

engagement levels; broaden individual skills, abilities, and horizons; strengthen intellectual and individual responsibility and independence; and actively involve students in the learning process.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

<http://old.jag.org/alabama/>

In the 2018-2019 school year, Alabama will operate 25 JAG programs serving 48 high schools and more than 1,000 at-risk students in grades 9-12. The JAG model consists of a comprehensive set of services that applies a holistic approach to assisting students. The components include: classroom instruction, competency-based curriculums, adult mentoring, advisement and support, student-led leadership development, job and post-secondary education placement services, 12-month follow-up services, and an accountability system. Data from Alabama's 2016 graduating class indicated a 99.7 percent graduation rate, and 98 percent of those graduates experienced a positive outcome (i.e., employed, in the military, or pursuing a post-secondary education).

***My Life, My Way*: Louisiana Workforce Commission's Online Career Exploration Tool**

<http://www.laworks.net/mylife/default.aspx>

The Louisiana Workforce Commission's *My Life, My Way* website allows an individual to estimate living costs and find the right career and salary to match his or her needs, interests, and goals. The tool guides users through a step-by-step process to explore career opportunities that includes completing the regionally-based "My Life" module about personal expenses and salary needs, exploring careers that match personal interest and salary needs, and reviewing current job postings in career fields of interest. The tool integrates current data and information related to career fields and job openings.

Success Coaching at Wallace State Community College (Hanceville, Alabama)

<http://www.wallacestate.edu/successcoaching>

Success Coaches at Wallace State meet regularly with students and provide them with the structure, tools, and motivation they need to persist through challenges and get the most out of their education. Coaches proactively work with students in their efforts to prioritize and fit their academic commitments into their lives, resulting in students who:

- Define their academic, personal, and career goals, and what it will take to achieve them
- Understand and fully utilize their resources
- Manage their time and stress so they perform at their best

Common coaching topics include balancing priorities outside of school, setting up a study schedule, minimizing stress, strengthening test-taking skills, budgeting and financial literacy, planning for a future career, setting goals, and getting involved on campus and in the community. Students who work with a Success Coach tend to be more effective, are more likely to complete their degree on time, and have a higher level of engagement with campus staff and resources. Coaches work with students on their educational experience as well as the bigger life picture, making sure that coursework and other priorities are balanced and the student is successful.

3. Pathways

Ready to Work

<https://alabamareadytowork.org/about-rtw/>

Alabama's Ready to Work (RTW) program, operated by the Alabama Community College System in cooperation with AIDT, provides a career pathway for individuals with limited education and employment experience. RTW's workplace environment provides trainees the entry-level skills required for employment with most businesses and industries in Alabama. Training is provided at no cost to participants. The RTW sites are selected on a priority basis according to economic need and the college's demonstrated ability to ensure effective program operations and services. RTW curriculum is set to standards cited by business and industry employers throughout the state and the skills cited by the U. S. Department of Labor.

Apprenticeship Alabama

<http://www.apprenticeshipalabama.org/>

Apprenticeship Alabama is committed to ensuring employees in Alabama have the tools needed to develop an industry-driven, Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program. For workers, RAs offer opportunities to earn a salary while learning the skill trade necessary to succeed in high-demand careers. RAs help employers looking to hire, train, or retain a skilled workforce and workers looking for a new career in a well-paying occupation.

Apprenticeship Alabama supports industry-specific, on-the-job training, and classroom theory taught over a one to six year period. Apprentices receive a progressive wage, giving them an "earn while you learn" training experience that specifically meets a company's workforce needs. Most importantly, upon completion of the program, the apprentice will have a transportable credential that will increase high wage earning potential. Apprenticeship Alabama industry-focused sectors include healthcare, construction/carpentry, information technology, distribution/transportation/logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

Appendix D. Preliminary Action Steps and Ongoing Work

1. Implementation Framework

The Attainment Committee recognizes that the transition from planning to implementation of the Success Plus plan will be a critical step in increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama. The committee developed a preliminary framework and recommendations for an implementation process, including:

- A. Action Planning** – An early step in implementation should be to develop action steps to accomplish each objective. This should include identifying timelines, champions, resources, and metrics for each action step.

- B. Regular Review and Assessment (Plan, Do, Track, Adjust)** – The implementation process should be explicit about how often review and assessment of progress is needed, and suggestions for this include:
 - Monthly reporting from regional workforce councils (already occurring)
 - Quarterly review of data/progress toward implementation and plan adjustment
 - Annual review and update of strategic plan

- C. Capturing Ongoing Work** – An early step in implementation should be capturing work and initiatives already happening in various agencies, organizations, and regions. There is good work already driving toward objectives identified in the plan, and communicating this work will help demonstrate progress and commitment to the plan and its priorities.

- D. Foundational Study (Funding and Resources)** – An early step in implementation should be an analysis, audit, and/or asset mapping of resources already in place and allocated toward attainment efforts. This would be the basis for a gap analysis of funding and resources that will be needed for plan implementation. Other foundational studies may be needed early in the implementation process.

2. Preliminary Action Steps and Ongoing Work

The Attainment Committee brainstormed possible year one action items, next steps, and/or early wins for each objective. Action steps should be considered draft and preliminary and must be reviewed, revised, and added to as part of a formal implementation process. The committee also noted ongoing work that is already driving progress for some objectives. Key outcomes of this discussion are included in the tables below.

Priority 1: Awareness

Goal

All Alabama residents understand the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees and know how to find information and resources to get started or continue their education and training.

Objectives, Preliminary Actions Steps, and Ongoing Work

1A. Develop **public awareness campaigns** to educate and inform Alabama residents about opportunities and access to high-demand jobs.

- Action Step: Inventory best practices from across the state related to building awareness
- Action Step: Identify a committee with representation from multiple agencies to lead marketing efforts for the plan; coordinate with AWC marketing and promotion efforts
- Action Step: Develop a budget and identify resources to fund marketing efforts and web resources
- Action Step: Develop a public service campaign to reach key audiences for attainment

1B. Develop **information about earning certificates, credentials, and degrees** that lead to high-demand jobs and feature it on the **AlabamaWorks! one-stop shop website**.

- Action Step: Develop a Success Plus website tied to AlabamaWorks!
- Action Step: Drive traffic to the Success Plus website
- Action Step: Collect and analyze data related to website traffic and use it to inform future awareness strategies

1C. **Simply and consistently communicate** the importance of earning certificates, credentials, and degrees across the state.

- Action Step: Develop clear messaging for attainment to drive public awareness campaigns, website content, and general communication about attainment
- Action Step: Develop and use a common language across education, business, industry, and agency/community partners

1D. **Educate and engage champions** from education (career coaches, teachers, and administrators), employers (business, industry, career centers), government, and community partners (churches, libraries, nonprofits) to play a role in increasing educational attainment.

- Action Step: Engage non-profit partners and the faith community across the state
- Action Step: Engage a dynamic spokesperson to serve as a voice for attainment
- Action Step: Develop a train-the-trainer model for educating and engaging champions
- Action Step: Develop a presentation template for champions to use in educating and engaging partners across regions and industry clusters

Priority 2: Access and Success

Goal

Alabama residents of all ages, backgrounds, and resources have access to education and receive the continuous support they need to complete certificates, credentials, and degrees.

Objectives, Preliminary Actions Steps, and Ongoing Work

2A. Provide **education about financial aid**, personal finance, and debt management for students, families, and job seekers.

- [Action Step](#): Integrate a statewide college campaign with Cash for College program
- [Action Step](#): Simplify the message about funding available for education
- [Ongoing Work](#): Cash for College
- [Ongoing Work](#): Achieve Alabama

2B. Develop strategies to support **affordability of education and training**.

2C. Identify **barriers to access and success**, such as transportation, family healthcare, and childcare, and develop innovative and creative programs to address those barriers.

- [Action Step](#): Inventory ongoing work around development of student success programs across the state; create communities of learning around this

2D. Develop **student success services and navigation programs** at all levels of education and training.

2E. Develop strategies to **ensure equity of access and support** for populations with significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment, including disabled and special needs individuals, English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation college students, low-income individuals, minorities, rural residents, and women.

2F. Promote access to education and training for **individuals in the corrections system**, including those seeking pardon or parole.

2G. Promote access to education and training for **veterans**.

2H. Develop **online tools** to support access and success and share via website (see 1B).

- [Action Step](#): Develop a college and career exploration tool that includes the best available data

Priority 3: Pathways

Goal

Pathways from education and training to high-demand jobs are defined. Programs, curriculum, and guidance along pathways encourage success, achievement, and opportunities for continuing education.

Objectives, Preliminary Actions Steps, and Ongoing Work

3A. Design and communicate **clear pathways** from education and training to **high-demand jobs**.

- [Action Step](#): Use flow charts and digital pathways to communicate how students move through the education and workforce pipelines and how agencies work together along these pathways
- [Action Step](#): Define high-demand jobs
- [Action Step](#): Develop a gap analysis of programs leading to high-demand jobs at the K12, two-year, and four-year levels

3B. Expand **CTE and dual-enrollment** programs across the state and invest in training excellent teachers for these programs.

3C. Expand **work-based learning** programs across the state.

- [Action Step](#): Clearly define all types of work-based learning opportunities
- [Action Step](#): Publicize existing work-based learning programs
- [Ongoing Work](#): Governor's work-based learning initiative
- [Ongoing Work](#): ACCS focus on work-based learning

3D. Expand **apprenticeship opportunities** for youth and adults.

- [Ongoing Work](#): Apprenticeship Alabama
- [Ongoing Work](#): ACCS focus on apprenticeships

3E. Integrate **life and employment skills** in curriculum and training at multiple levels.

- [Ongoing Work](#): Survey business and industry need around life and employment skills

3F. Develop a formal process for establishing and evaluating **high-quality credentials** driven by the needs of business and industry on an ongoing basis.

- [Action Step](#): Develop a process for collecting and coordinating input from each regional workforce council to an AWC attainment committee.

3G. Strengthen the network of well-trained **career coaches and career coordinators** at all levels of education and training.

- [Action Step](#): Publish resources for career coaches and counselors to use that help guide students to schools and programs with strong outcomes
- [Action Step](#): Develop and resource professional development for career coaches, career coordinators, guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators so these professionals can be as effective as possible in supporting students
- [Ongoing Work](#): Worlds of Work parent's night

3H. Strengthen and expand use of statewide **career planning tools** for all levels of education and training.

- [Action Step](#): Develop digital tools to stimulate student interest in and exploration of pathways.

Priority 4: Leadership and Collaboration

Goal

Partners at the state, regional, and local levels work together to support efforts aimed at increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.

Objectives, Preliminary Actions Steps, and Ongoing Work

4A. Develop a collaborative structure and process to **support implementation** of the strategic plan and develop the action steps, timelines, champions, resources, and metrics for each objective. Engage education, employers, government, and community partners in this collective impact model.

- [Action Step: Prioritize development of an implementation structure and process in 2018-2019](#)

4B. Engage **regional leaders and workforce councils** and their membership to support implementation at the local level and ensure education and training leads to jobs for individuals.

4C. Integrate attainment goals **into regional workforce council strategic plans.**

- [Action Step: Integrate into funding metrics for regional workforce councils.](#)

4D. Evaluate **current resources and funding** related to educational attainment efforts, and **identify and commit resources** (funding, expertise, time) to initiatives identified in the strategic plan based on measurable outcomes.

4E. Identify **best practices** within Alabama and across other states and replicate these models.

Priority 5: Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Goal

Partners at the state, regional, and local levels work together to support efforts aimed at increasing post-secondary educational attainment in Alabama.

Objectives, Preliminary Actions Steps, and Ongoing Work

5A. Develop a **dashboard to track and share progress** for the strategic plan on a regular basis.

5B. Strengthen **data collection and reporting** related to education and workforce outcomes by linking existing data across state agencies.

5C. Analyze data and use the outcomes to **continuously improve programs**, recommend funding allocation, and propose future budget needs on a regular basis.

5D. Develop a process for forecasting **high-demand jobs** at the state and regional levels annually.

5E. Promote **development of educational and credential attainment targets** across the state that are aligned with the strategic plan.

5F. Formally **review and update the strategic plan** annually.

- [Action Step](#): Develop baseline data for attainment in the state that can be used in setting targets

