



Postsecondary Attainment Goal

Setting a statewide goal for postsecondary credential attainment is an essential precondition for making postsecondary education work for students and the economy. Yet although it's a step in the right direction, an overarching goal, in and of itself, is not enough. It does not provide enough information or offer enough direction on how to reach the desired attainment rate, nor does it illuminate the kinds of postsecondary credentials that are of most value in the labor market.

States need to know more about what types of credentials students are earning in order to assess how well those credentials align to employers' skill needs and how well-suited they are for in-demand careers that pay family-supporting wages. In addition, states need to know who is more likely to attain credentials and who is less likely to do so. We call for states to collect and track data on attainment by types of credentials (e.g., degrees, certificates, and certifications) and categories of learners (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, gender, age cluster, prior college experience, and enrollment intensity, among other potential measures). Moreover, states should adopt and invest in strategies to close specific gaps in attainment among these populations and credential types.

Findings from 15-State Study



On average, half of the five recommended attainment goal policies have been adopted per state.



Signs of progress: The vast majority of the states have an attainment goal. More than half of them track attainment by particular types of credentials and have articulated strategies for increasing attainment among underserved populations.



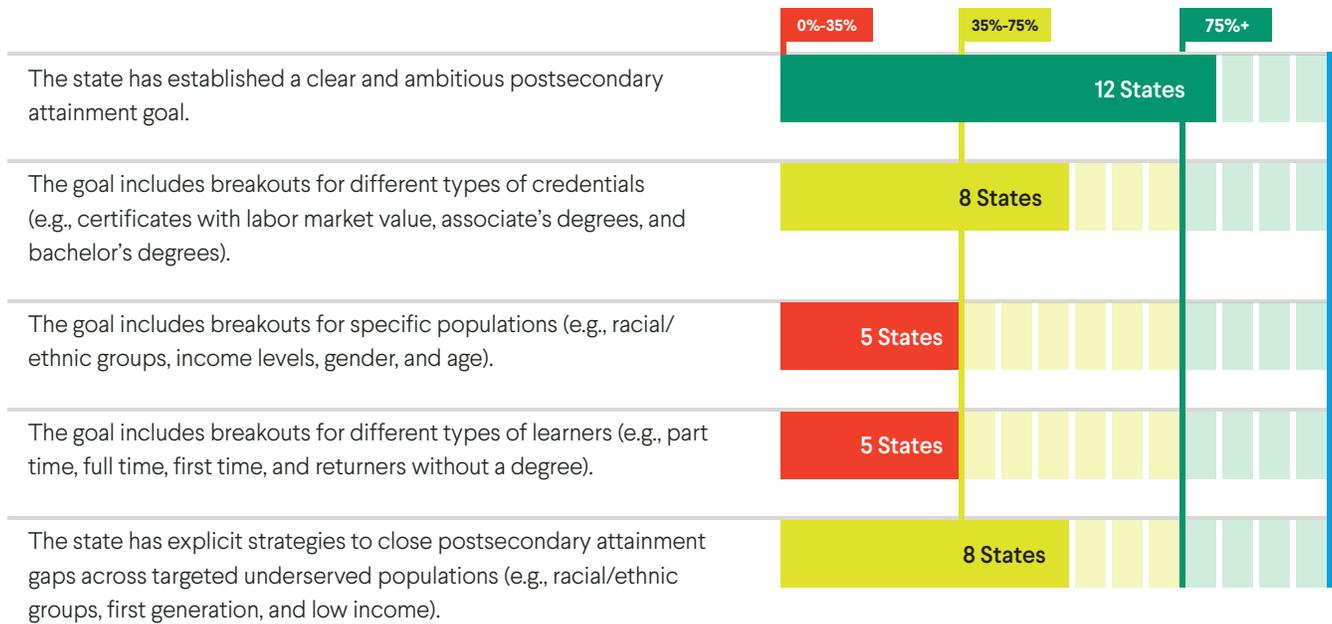
Critical gaps: Only one-third of the states are measuring progress by student demographics and learner types (e.g., part time, full time, first time, and returners without a degree).



Ahead of the curve: Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1: POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT GOAL

The state has a clear and ambitious postsecondary attainment goal that includes breakouts for historically underserved populations.



State Spotlight: **Texas**

While almost all of the states we studied have set a postsecondary attainment goal, Texas has gone further than most to achieve its goal. In aiming for at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 to have a certificate or degree by 2030 (known as 60x30TX), the state is implementing a broad set of programs designed to help more students, including adults, attain a degree. State actions include supporting designated college advisors in high-need high schools, providing grants to support colleges' efforts to increase their completion rates, and retooling state financial aid systems so that they are more accurate and effective. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has established targets for specific populations and publishes a yearly [progress report](#) with detailed metrics around completion rates, acquisition of marketable skills, and student debt loads.

