

Priority: Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness

Prepare Georgians for workforce opportunities by ensuring their skills and credentials meet employers' needs.

Policy Context

In 2019, 42.4% of Georgians held a post-secondary degree. Another 10.4% of residents had earned an occupational license, certificate, or certification, bringing the state's post-secondary attainment rate to 52.8%.

For Georgia to remain competitive on the global stage, state leaders will need to set the sights higher, focusing on an attainment goal of 65%. While annual increases in attainment rates have averaged 1 to 1.2% since 2012, a closer look at the data suggests Georgia will encounter headwinds in reaching the North Star.

Three factors will make reaching 65% attainment more difficult: a generation of skilled and credentialed workers reaching retirement age, a growing share of the youth population lacking access to high-quality educational opportunities, and low post-secondary attainment for Black and Latino residents. With the share of the White population expected to dip below 50% by 2030 and enrollments declining at institutions serving students of color and working adults, Georgia will fall behind without a bold strategy to support post-secondary enrollment and completion efforts for underserved groups.

State leaders should use existing system assets to create a statewide post-secondary and workforce strategy that transcends sector-based decisions and governance. This strategy should provide opportunities for all individuals to be successful and support Georgia's overall economic development goals.

Expanding access to all types of credential programs could provide a way for all Georgians, especially nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents, to fully participate in the state's economic prosperity.

Key Outcomes

Increase the overall attainment to 65% by 2033, up from the current rate of 52.8%.

Accelerate attainment rates for underserved groups by at least 30% by 2033.

EdQuest Framework

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Advanced Instructional Systems

Supportive Learning Environments

Power Strategies		
Build Momentum	Remove Barriers	Market Opportunity
Expanding access to accelerated learning options so that students can earn post-secondary credits or credentials while enrolled in high school	Creating a comprehensive, statewide need-based financial aid program that makes post-secondary options more accessible for youth and working adults.	Expanding and deepening incentives for working adults to earn short-term post-secondary credentials in areas of workforce shortage.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State policymakers should explore how to use financial aid as a lever to increase affordability, award merit, and encourage people to enter high-demand, high-wage occupations. ➤ State, system, and corporate leaders should develop a more inclusive and data-driven post-secondary narrative to demonstrate that four-year credentials are not the only pathway to family-sustaining employment. ➤ The Georgia General Assembly should expand incentives for private-sector companies to offer “learn and earn” opportunities for Georgians enrolled in post-secondary programs, thereby creating tighter alignment between education and workforce development policy.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that contribute to post-secondary completion and workforce readiness.

- Percent growth in post-secondary enrollment for adult learners ages 26 to 54
- Percent of students who return to college for their second year
- Percent growth in post-secondary attainment for Georgians with some credit but no credential
- Percent growth in number of Georgians who have earned certificates, certifications, and occupational licenses
- Job placement rates.

State Leadership

State leaders can support increased post-secondary readiness in several ways including:

- Enhancing and aligning existing credit articulation agreements to ensure public institutions award post-secondary credit for alternative credentials and nontraditional experiences earned across the K-12, post-secondary, and workforce sectors.
- Expanding current system efforts to create degree maps and stackable credential programs that enable students to see how they can build their skills and workforce marketability by advancing their education and training.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Credit and program articulation agreements among and between each of the K-12 and post-secondary education systems: Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), and University System of Georgia (USG)	Quick Start and incumbent working programs executed by TCSG
Nexus Degrees and Degrees that Pay, two USG initiatives	\$1 billion in annual financial aid support through the HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs
Complete College Georgia initiatives, including 15 to Finish, Guided Pathways, and Momentum Year	Economic development strategies that attract creative arts, advanced manufacturing, and electric vehicle corporations to Georgia

Improving on current policy and practice

Since 2011, Complete College Georgia (CCG), a statewide initiative led by the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), has adopted strategies to improve student access to and graduation from post-secondary institutions in Georgia. The initiative has focused on shortening time to degree, improving college readiness, building strong sector partnerships, restructuring instructional delivery, and transforming remediation.

The Georgia Partnership recommends that state and system leaders deepen these efforts to create stacked credential programs that, in turn, create authentic workforce pathways. Reimagining student financial aid, institutional funding, and non-academic support services are three ways to sustain multiple pathways to post-secondary attainment and workforce success.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

A post-secondary strategy informed by state and local workforce needs should focus on two objectives: increasing the number of Georgians with degrees in high-need areas and removing barriers that stand in the way of nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents completing post-secondary credentials with workforce value.

For Georgia to reach the North Star goal by 2033, state leaders should invest in strategies that ensure enough Georgians are available to maintain the state's global competitiveness through a highly skilled and diversified workforce, while also assuring that post-secondary and workforce training programs are of sufficient quality to meet employer needs.