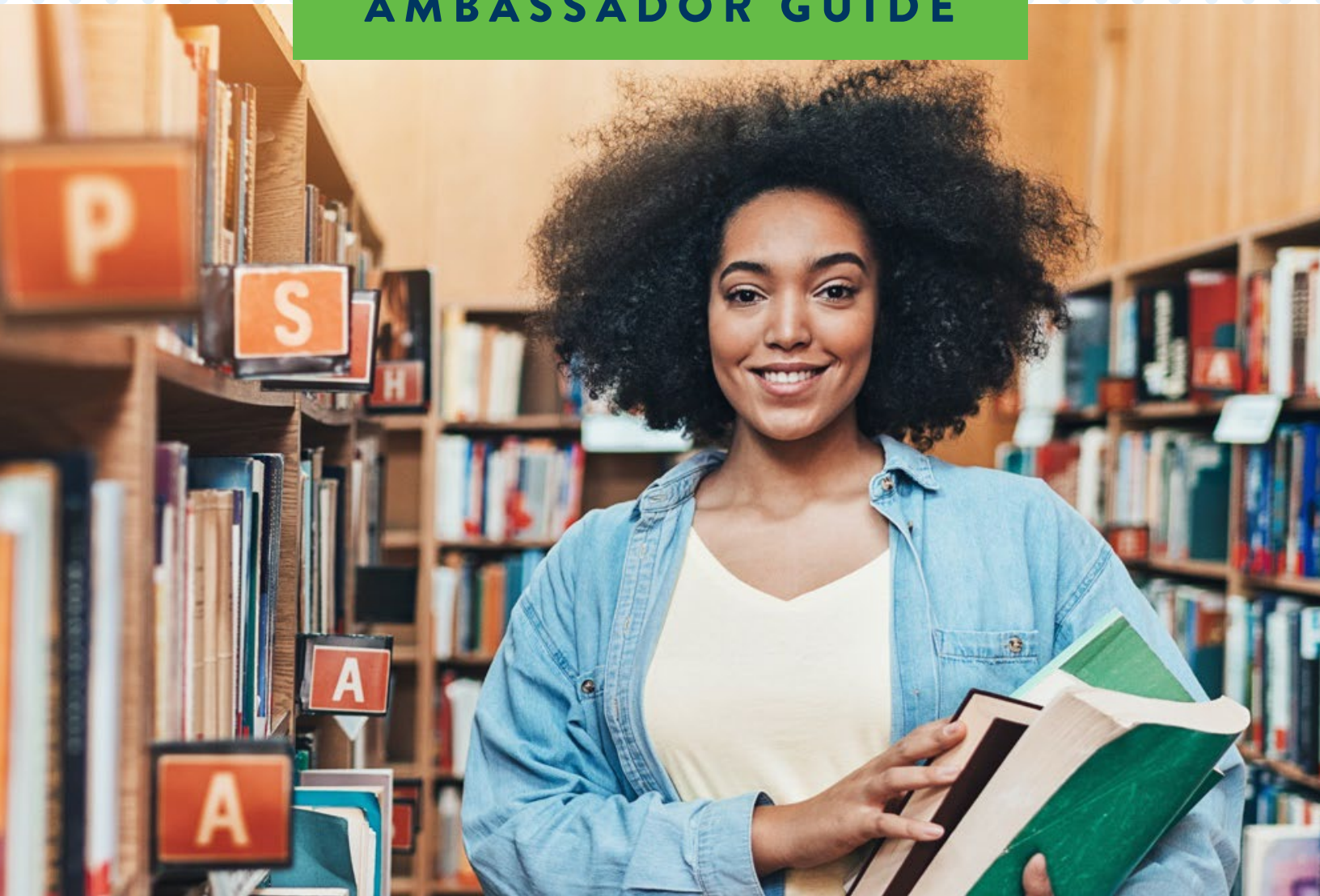


FORWARD T→GETHER

AMBASSADOR GUIDE





INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, states across the nation have set educational attainment goals in order to meet the projected need for 60 percent of adults to have a college degree, certificate, industry-recognized certification, or other credential of value by 2025. This past year saw a record number of individuals experiencing short- and long-term unemployment.

In an effort to assist states and local communities to meet their educational attainment goals, The Graduate! Network has established ambassador programs in partnership with agencies, organizations, and schools across the country to help them spread the word about education and training opportunities for adults.

In the spring of 2021, the State of Minnesota partnered with The Graduate! Network to bring an ambassador program to Minnesota. Forward Together partners include the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota Department of Education Adult Basic Education, Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry, and Minnesota State Colleges & Universities.

This toolkit is designed to serve as a resource for Minnesota’s Forward Together Ambassadors. It contains the following sections, with testimonies from adult learners in between each section:

- PART ONE** EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN MINNESOTA
- PART TWO** KEY PATHWAYS FOR MINNESOTA’S ADULT LEARNERS
- PART THREE** THE ROLE OF FORWARD TOGETHER AMBASSADORS IN HELPING ADULTS FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- PART FOUR** RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH ADULT LEARNERS
- PART FIVE** HOW TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS FROM ADULT LEARNERS
- ADDENDUM** EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE: MINNESOTA’S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GOAL 2025



ABOUT THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding more than \$207 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending accredited institutions in Minnesota. The agency oversees tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

Learn more: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/>

ABOUT FORWARD TOGETHER

Forward Together is a collaborative discussion among leaders in education, industry and community focused on increasing the number of adults completing education and training and reaching the educational attainment goal in Minnesota. Forward Together convenes local meetings and listening sessions where leaders gather to talk about educational attainment data, current local initiatives, and what is and isn't working at the community level.

Forward Together also assists local educational attainment champions who are willing to lead future work to recruit other community members and identify local strategies to address education equity gaps and workforce needs, build momentum on a local level, and engage citizens in taking action.

Learn more: <https://mnforwardtogether.com>

ABOUT THE GRADUATE! NETWORK

The Graduate! Network's vision is that every adult who aspires to earn a college degree has access to the resources and support they need to start and complete their degree.

The Graduate! Network believes that everyone should have an equitable chance to achieve the education and career they desire. They collaborate with a range of stakeholders to build, nurture, and assess structures and systems that support adults to start and complete their degrees.

Learn more: <https://graduate-network.org/>



ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY:

★ CARRIE, MESABI RANGE COLLEGE

Carrie attended Mesabi Range College right out of high school, but she soon decided it wasn't the right time for her to be in college. "I was not ready for the responsibility of college at that time, and I didn't really know what degree I wanted to pursue," she says.

Carrie eventually attended cosmetology school and worked as a hairstylist for 18 years. "During that time, I often thought about returning to college, but I decided it would be too difficult to manage with a full-time job and a young family," she says.

Several of Carrie's clients worked at Mesabi Range College, and they told her about the college's online programs. "That sounded ideal for me," Carrie says. "With my family's support and encouragement, I finally decided to go for it!"

Carrie graduated with an A.A.S. in Executive Office Management and works full time at Mesabi Range College. She's continuing her education by completing her A.A. degree and plans to transfer to a four-year institution to complete a Bachelor's in Business.

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With my family's support and encouragement, I finally decided to go for it!



"As a first-generation college student, I really appreciated the time and assistance from the staff and faculty," Carrie says. "They helped me figure out everything that I needed to be successful, and were there for me when I encountered challenges. The smaller class sizes and online coursework made it feasible for me to continue to work and be with my family while going to college."

PART ONE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EMPLOYMENT IN MINNESOTA

(Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section comes from Minnesota Compass, a project of Wilder Research.)

MINNESOTA'S WORKFORCE

Minnesota's economy and workforce have struggled amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Total payroll jobs in Minnesota dropped from 2.93 million in 2020 to 2.76 million in 2021. And while job numbers have started ticking up, there are still 167,000 fewer jobs statewide than there were in March 2020.

At 80 percent, Minnesota was home to one of the highest proportions of working adults in the nation. But since the start of the pandemic, 44 percent of workers in Minnesota have filed a new unemployment claim. Minnesotans hardest hit by unemployment have been workers in leisure and hospitality, workers under 35 years of age, and workers without education beyond high school.

Furthermore, 63 percent of new unemployment claims filed in Minnesota since the start of the pandemic were from American Indian workers, and 70 percent were from Black workers. As we recover and rebuild, diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical to our shared well-being.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN MINNESOTA

At a high level, Minnesota is home to residents with high educational attainment. Since 2000, Minnesota has increased its share of adults with education beyond high school by 10 percentage points, from 59.1 percent to 69.1 percent.

At 69.1 percent, Minnesota is home to the fifth highest share of adults with education beyond high school, behind Washington, D.C. (76 percent), Colorado (71 percent), and Utah and Washington (70 percent).

This is important because Minnesota expects the total number of payroll jobs to increase to 3.3 million by 2028, and 67 percent of those jobs will expect training, certification, or a degree beyond high school. Currently only 63 percent of Minnesotans have a certificate or degree.

But Minnesota is not adequately preparing all Minnesotans to succeed. While 69 percent of Minnesota adults overall have some education beyond high school, adults who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) fall below that mark:

- 49 percent of Hispanic and Latinx adults in Minnesota have education beyond high school. Among Hispanic and Latinx adults, 29 percent have completed a certificate or degree beyond high school.
- 53 percent of American Indian adults in Minnesota have education beyond high school. Among American Indian adults, 28 percent have completed a certificate or degree beyond high school.
- 54 percent of Black adults in Minnesota have education beyond high school. Among Black adults, 37 percent have completed a certificate or degree beyond high school.
- 66 percent of Asian adults in Minnesota have education beyond high school. Among Asian adults, 65 percent have completed a certificate or degree beyond high school.

Although Forward Together Ambassadors are focused on increasing postsecondary education and training for adults, it is important to note that while high school graduation rates have improved across most races and ethnicities, Minnesota ranks in the bottom half of states for high school graduation rates among BIPOC students:

- At 70 percent, Minnesota ranks 49th for high school graduation rates for Hispanic students.
- At 70 percent, Minnesota ranks 48th for high school graduation rates for Black students.
- At 51 percent, Minnesota ranks 46th for high school graduation rates for American Indian students.
- At 87 percent, Minnesota ranks 40th for high school graduation rates for Asian students.
- At 89 percent, Minnesota ranks 29th for high school graduation rates for White (non-Hispanic) students.

MINNESOTA'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GOAL 2025

In 2015, the Minnesota State Legislature set a goal to get 70 percent of Minnesota adults ages 25 to 44 to obtain a postsecondary certificate or higher by 2025 (Minn. Laws 2015 Chapter 69 Article 3 Sec. 6). Most importantly, the law also sets 30 percent and 50 percent educational attainment benchmarks for all races and ethnicities.²

Read more about Minnesota's educational attainment goal and the progress being made in the [addendum](#) to this toolkit.



The percentage of adults by racial-ethnic group who have completed a certificate or degree beyond high school come from OHE's "Educating for the Future" 2020 report: https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/EducatingfortheFuture2020_final.pdf

² http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/sPages/educ_attain_goal_2025.cfm

ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY:

★ NAIMA, NORTHLAND COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

With her infant son, Naima immigrated from Kenya to the United States in 2017. Upon settling in East Grand Forks, she did not wait long to seek out the educational opportunities that were available to her. Naima first explored an American education through Northwest Service Cooperative's Adult Basic Education (ABE) program housed on Northland Community & Technical College's East Grand Forks campus.

"I was determined to get my GED," explains Naima, "but I knew I could do more, so I also pursued a Minnesota adult high school diploma." She completed both her GED and high school diploma in only one year.

Following graduation from her ABE courses, Naima threw herself into college, enrolling in classes at Northland. "I loved the atmosphere at Northland," Naima shares. "The classes are just the right size and faculty are very accessible. That was important to me."



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My hope is to inspire other people to feel empowered—get motivated to make a change in their lives if they want to.

In addition to school, club activities, and her business, Naima is a wife and mother who is about to give birth to her second child in February. "People always wonder how I balance all my responsibilities," shares Naima, "I couldn't do it without the support of my husband, Ahmed. He is my biggest ally. And really, it is about prioritizing your life."

"My hope is to inspire other people to feel empowered—get motivated to make a change in their lives if they want to," Naima declares. "It doesn't matter if you have kids, need to work, or have other responsibilities — start slow with one or two classes at a time."

Naima has big plans for the future. After graduation from Northland, she plans to transfer to a university to pursue her MBA.

Read more about Naima here: <https://northlandstories.com/naima-haji-is-inspiring-success/>

PART TWO KEY PATHWAYS FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN MINNESOTA

Adults in Minnesota have many opportunities to pursue training beyond high school, including options that are at no or low cost to them. Here are five key pathways for adult learners in Minnesota:

1. Complete an Integrated Education and Training Program or Adult Basic Education
2. Complete a Registered Apprenticeship
3. Earn a Short-Term Certificate
4. Earn an Associate Degree
5. Earn a Bachelor's Degree

PATHWAY #1: COMPLETE AN INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM OR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Through Minnesota's Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, adult learners can earn a GED and/or adult high school diploma while taking college courses, completing a certificate program, and participating in workforce training. Individuals may qualify for workforce training funds or Pell grants to pay for IET.

IET programs are offered at local Adult Basic Education (ABE) sites, CareerForce Centers, employers, and post-secondary institutions.

In addition, Minnesota has nearly 300 ABE programs offering free classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), math, reading, college prep, computers, and more. Adults can also complete an adult high school diploma or GED through ABE.

Learn more about IET and ABE programs:

Contact the the ABE site in your area: <https://hotline.mnabe.org/>

Connect with a CareerForce specialist <https://www.careerforcemn.com/connect-us>

PATHWAY #2: COMPLETE A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Registered apprenticeships allow adult learners to “earn and learn”: apprentices earn a salary while learning a skilled craft or trade. Apprenticeships generally take two to four years of combined on-the-job training and classroom instruction.

Apprenticeship programs are open to anyone with a high school diploma or anyone who is actively pursuing an adult high school diploma or GED.

Learn more and find registered apprenticeships across the state:

<https://secure.doli.state.mn.us/apprenticeshipsponsor>

🔗 PATHWAY #3: EARN A SHORT-TERM CERTIFICATE

Public and private colleges and other training providers offer short-term training programs to help individuals get started in high-demand careers where there are lots of opportunities. Programs require a year or less of training and are available in many different career fields, from agriculture and natural resources to utilities.

Learn more and explore the many different types of programs available:

<https://www.minnstate.edu/careerexploration/skillup/shortterm/findtraining.html>

🔗 PATHWAY #4: EARN AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE

Adult learners can complete an associate degree at Minnesota's two-year institutions, which include community, technical, and tribal colleges. They can either opt to complete a career program that will lead directly to a job, or they can complete their first two years of a bachelor's degree and then transfer credits to a four-year college or university to finish.

Learn more about Minnesota's two-year colleges and tribal colleges here:

<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=64>

🔗 PATHWAY #5: EARN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Minnesota's four-year institutions offer a wide variety of undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Students can study at a public or private four-year institution.

Learn more about Minnesota's four-year colleges here:

<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=64>



Together, these five pathways provide ample opportunities for adults at all levels of educational attainment to further their education:

Table 1: Key Pathways for Adult Learners by Highest Level of Educational Attainment

This pathway is available to potential adult learners at this level of educational attainment.

This pathway is not available to potential adult learners at this level of educational attainment.

	Pathway #1: Complete an Integrated Training and Education program	Pathway #2: Complete a Registered Apprenticeship	Pathway #3: Earn a Short-Term Certificate	Pathway #4: Earn an Associate Degree	Pathway #5: Earn a Bachelor's Degree
Some High School, No Diploma					
High School Diploma or Equivalent					
Some College, No Credential					
Certificate or Associate Degree					

*Must be actively pursuing an adult high school diploma or GED.

** Must meet ability to benefit requirements. Contact Minnesota State for more information: https://askus.minnstate.edu/app/chat/chat_launch/c/1902

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SHORT-TERM CERTIFICATES, ASSOCIATE DEGREES, AND BACHELOR DEGREES

About Grants and Scholarships

Both the State of Minnesota and the federal government provide numerous grants and scholarships that students don't have to pay back after they graduate.

Grants are like gifts and are usually awarded to students with the fewest financial resources. Grants are considered need-based aid. This need is determined when a student fills out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Grants usually come from federal and state governments and are sent directly to the school.

Scholarships are awarded based on a student's academic or athletic achievement, cultural or religious background, or special skills and talents. The majority of students who are awarded scholarships receive them from the institution they attend. The Minnesota state government provides scholarships for specific student groups.

Learn more: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=1296>

Featured Grants and Scholarships for Short-Term Certificates, Associate Degrees, and Bachelor’s Degrees

Pell Grant: These federally funded grants help almost 10 million full- and part-time college and vocational school students nationally. Students with family incomes up to \$65,000 may be eligible for Pell Grants. Most Pell awards, however, go to students with family incomes below \$30,000. Learn more: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?PageID=139>

Minnesota State Grant: These state-funded grants help students from low- and moderate-income families pay for educational expenses at eligible Minnesota colleges or universities. Learn more: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?PageID=138>

Forward Together Grant: To aid in the recovery of the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of Minnesota is offering grants to unemployed and low-income individuals interested in furthering their education and training. Learn more: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/>

Workforce Development Scholarship Program: The Minnesota Legislature has provided funding for hundreds of \$2,500 scholarships at Minnesota State’s two- and four-year institutions. Learn more: <https://www.minnstate.edu/stories/wds/index.html>

Tuition Assistance for Deaf Students: Under Minnesota state law, a deaf person is entitled to tuition assistance at a Minnesota state college or university or the University of Minnesota. Contact the college or university of your choice for additional information.

Senior Citizens Higher Education Program: Minnesota residents 62 or older may enroll in courses at a state-sponsored institution of higher education in Minnesota for reduced costs, either to audit or the earn college credit. Contact the college or university of your choice for additional information.

Featured Grants and Scholarships for Bachelor’s Degrees Only

Under the **U Promise Scholarship and Promise Plus Free Tuition Programs** at the University of Minnesota, eligible Minnesota resident undergraduate students meeting the specified family income levels and who enroll at the U of M will be guaranteed funds to support their collegiate aspirations. Learn more about U Promise and Promise Plus: <https://system.umn.edu/u-promise-and-promise-plus>

HOW MUCH CAN A STUDENT RECEIVE IN GRANTS?

Eligibility for grants depends on a number of factors. The maximum awards for the students with the highest need are as follows for 2021-2022:

Federal Pell Grant:	up to \$6,495
Minnesota State Grant (two-year college):	up to \$8,322
Minnesota State Grant (four-year college):	up to \$12,836

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

To receive financial aid, students must apply for it by filling out and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Learn more: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=130>

Undocumented students don’t qualify for federal financial aid and are not able to submit a federal FAFSA. However, these students can submit a MN Dream Act application to be considered for state financial aid. Learn more: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?PageID=2056>

ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORIES:

★ JUSTIN, ST. PAUL COLLEGE

<https://www.saintpaul.edu/news/justin-nsaginganje>



Justin came to Saint Paul from Uganda in 2017 with a burning desire to learn. He soon started the Gateway to College program at Saint Paul College.

After three years of arduous work, Justin earned his high school diploma and an Associate Degree in Business simultaneously.

Justin considers the Saint Paul College Gateway faculty his extended family. They helped him improve his English skills and provided him with an exceptional understanding of business management and people skills necessary to succeed in a managerial career.

Since graduating from Saint Paul College with his Associate Degree last month, Justin quickly enrolled at St. Cloud State University, where he is studying Business Management. He plans to get his Master's degree and then go into Management for a large company such as Amazon or Target.

★ ALICIA, MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

<https://www.minnesota.edu/stories/alicia-tribble>

“Everyone is so inviting and helpful at Minnesota State, and that’s what I love the most about going here. I really thought I’d be an outcast considering I am a mom, but I made many friends from all walks of life within my program, and we all are still cheering each other on.

“I currently work at Job Service North Dakota as an employment advisor. My team is amazing and so supportive of me going to school. Without them, I wouldn’t have ever thought about going to school. They saw the potential in me that I didn’t.

“After I did a college visit, I loved the size and the overall atmosphere at Minnesota State. As I met students and staff within the program, they made me feel as though I belong, and I knew I made the right decision. I love helping people, and HR is a guaranteed field of work. Knowing that I could work in any field with an HR degree is a bonus, as well.



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Now I want to be the first one in my immediate family to get a degree.

“Now I want to be the first one in my immediate family to get a degree. I also want to prove all the doubters wrong — with me having my daughter my senior year of high school, a lot of people thought I wouldn’t graduate. But I did, and now I’m in college, which to me is just the cherry on top.”

PART THREE THE ROLE OF FORWARD TOGETHER AMBASSADORS IN HELPING ADULTS FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

We need all of us working together to reach our educational attainment goal. Minnesota's Forward Together Ambassadors play a key role in spreading the word about education and training opportunities for adults ages 25 and older.

WHAT IS A FORWARD TOGETHER AMBASSADOR?

A Forward Together Ambassador is someone with ties to family, neighbors, coworkers, and community members who are interested in furthering their education.

Ambassadors are not required to be experts in the fields of adult education or higher education. Neither are they expected to have all the answers. Instead, Ambassadors are catalysts who open the door to a conversation with someone who may not have known how or with whom to start the conversation themselves. Ambassadors provide ongoing support and encouragement to adults to take the next step toward furthering their education. They hit their outreach goals and adhere to the reporting guidelines established during their training.

We cannot overemphasize the power of this personal outreach, especially when it comes to family. According to a recent survey by Strada Education, "Families are ranked as the most valuable source of advice about education or training for those considering enrolling."³

Successful Ambassadors share the following characteristics:

- They are familiar with and support Minnesota's educational attainment goal (see bottom of [p.4](#)).
- They are passionate about the role higher education can play in bettering the lives of Minnesotans, especially those from historically marginalized and underserved racial-ethnic communities.
- They understand that Minnesota's most well-paying and in-demand jobs increasingly require postsecondary education or training.
- They recognize that a skilled workforce is the key to economic mobility and prosperity for Minnesotans and Minnesota businesses.
- They understand the challenges and opportunities of adult degree and credential completion, especially for adults with no postsecondary experience.
- They enjoy giving public presentations and talking with people one-on-one.
- They're not afraid to challenge, inspire, and hold people accountable.
- They're organized, good with logistics, and consistent with follow-through.
- They're committed to setting and achieving their goals and reporting their progress.

³ https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-8.pdf?utm_medium=email&_hsmt=88224563&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--GZKyL88CYtZjcrhATZK4sXh7jV4zO3_QTpGo9OjZT55q33NhbEMXwcEkj4ov6ID1hG_h-2dB-MTe-MhPGvPx4Ng9pFclAwqLcw6AKXwJg0uerfA&utm_content=88224563&utm_source=hs_email

WHAT DO FORWARD TOGETHER AMBASSADORS DO?

Forward Together Ambassadors engage in the following tasks:

1. Identify potential adult learners.
2. Engage with potential adult learners about the benefits of furthering their education and training.
3. Refer potential adult learners to the resource most appropriate to their educational and career goals.
4. Invite other people to serve as Forward Together Ambassadors.

1. Identify potential adult learners.

A potential adult learner is someone 25 or older who expresses an interest in furthering their education and training. In many cases, a potential adult learner will have already made some progress toward their goal, such as having earned some college credit.

You might identify potential adult learners among your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. As an Ambassador, you'll be actively seeking out potential adult learners in your networks so that you can share with them the benefits that come with furthering their education and training, and the resources available to assist them.

Here are some tips for finding and connecting with the potential adult learners in your networks:

- Post to social media about the key pathways for adult learners in Minnesota and invite interested parties to connect with you for more information and conversation.
- Initiate conversations with anyone you know who has had to file for unemployment during the pandemic. If they show interest, introduce them to the key pathways for adult learners in Minnesota.
- Initiate conversations with any frontline workers who you think might be interested in switching fields. If they show interest, introduce them to the key pathways for adult learners in Minnesota.
- Host an information session at your place of worship, workplace, home, children's school, community center, etc., and invite people to learn more about the key pathways for adult learners in Minnesota.

2. Engage with potential adult learners about the benefits of furthering their education and training.

For adult learners the thought of completing a certificate or degree can bring with it many emotions, from hope to self-doubt. Misconceptions can often prevent individuals from taking the next step, but thankfully, facts can provide the motivation needed to move forward.

Once you've identified a potential adult learner who's interested in talking further with you, use the resources in this toolkit to help them understand the potential benefits of furthering their education and training (see [Part Five](#)).

3. Refer potential adult learners to the resources most appropriate to their education and training goals.

Asking the right questions will help you determine which resources are most appropriate for the potential adult learner you're speaking with. Here are a few examples:

- What's the highest level of education you've completed?
- Are you interested in staying in your current career or switching careers?
- What type of education or training are you most interested in pursuing?

It is important for potential adult learners to talk to knowledgeable people who can help them determine the best path for them and assist them through the application and enrollment processes. Use the resources in this toolkit to help set them on the right path to getting connected with those people (see [Part Two](#) and [Part Four](#)).

4. Invite other people to serve as Forward Together Ambassadors.

Do you know someone who would be interested in becoming a Forward Together Ambassador? Don't hesitate to reach out to friends, colleagues, and family who could serve alongside you. You can download and share our Ambassador recruitment flyer or direct them to the Ambassador webpage:

- Flyer: https://mnforwardtogether.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FWD-TGTHR-Ambassador-Flyer_2_ADA-1.pdf
- Webpage: <https://mnforwardtogether.com/ambassadors>





ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY:

★ JARLY, PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY MANUFACTURING PROGRAM

<https://www.careerforcemn.com/careerforce-blog/jarly-gets-training-he-needs-reach-his-employment-goals>

“My new job it’s AMAZING!! I love it, they are so nice and the job itself is awesome!” Jarly wrote staff at Career-Force partner South Central Workforce Council. “I honestly appreciate everything you did for me, I have made it really far. I wouldn’t have never made it without your help and the help of others. Thank you so much!!!”

Jarly had set a goal for himself of becoming a gas tungsten arc welder after graduating high school.

He landed a great job as a welder in March, just as the pandemic’s effects were starting to reach Minnesota.

Jarly’s determination helped him achieve his goals. He traveled across Central America and Mexico before arriving in the US searching for his family. After surviving that journey and reuniting with his family he finished high school in Minnesota before entering the Pathways to Prosperity Manufacturing program, taking classes at South Central College to earn his welding certificate.

“It was hard, but I liked learning it and enjoyed the struggle and achievement,” said Jarly about the Pathways program, noting he has already recommended the program to a friend who needs help preparing for an in-demand career. His advice: “It is not going to be easy, you will struggle a little bit, but practice...it gets better.”



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It was hard, but I liked learning it and enjoyed the struggle and achievement.

PART FOUR RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH POTENTIAL ADULT LEARNERS

The State of Minnesota and the federal government have abundant resources to assist adult learners with finding their way to and through postsecondary education. In addition to the resources listed under each individual pathway (see [Part Two](#)), share the following resources with the potential adult learners you speak with.

RESOURCES FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

■ Career Pathways

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Career Pathways tool helps students understand how their education and training path matches employment opportunities:

<https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/career-pathways-tool/>

■ Graduate Employment Outcomes

The Graduate Employment Outcomes data tool shows how many Minnesota graduates are finding Minnesota jobs, and at what wages:

<https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/graduate-employment-outcomes/>

■ CAREERwise

CAREERwise provides online tools for Minnesotans in the areas of career planning and education or training: <http://careerwise.minnstate.edu/>

■ CareerForce

In person, on the phone, and online, CareerForce provides tailored resources to help meet the needs of all Minnesota career seekers: <https://www.careerforcemn.com/career-seekers>

RESOURCES FOR PAYING FOR COLLEGE

■ Paying for College

This page on OHE's website includes information about financial aid basics, grants and scholarships, other aid options, and student loans: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=888>
(See p. 10 of this toolkit for a featured list of scholarships and grants to share with potential adult learners.)

■ Financial Aid Estimator

OHE's online tool helps potential students estimate their eligibility to receive a Federal Pell Grant and/or a Minnesota State Grant: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/Estimator/firstQuestions.cfm>

■ Federal Student Aid

The official website of the U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid includes comprehensive information to help you understand and apply for federal aid, including a link to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): <https://studentaid.gov>

■ Minnesota Dream Act

Undocumented students can apply for state financial aid by accessing the online MN Dream Act–State Financial Aid application on this page: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=2056>

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT SERVICES

■ FAFSA and Dream Act Events

FAFSA/Dream Act completion events provide free information and assistance to students and families in the process of applying for financial aid. These events are open to adult learners:
<https://sites.google.com/view/minnesotagoestocollege/initiatives/fafsa-events?authuser=0>

■ State- and Federal-Funded Services

Many adults need help overcoming obstacles in the way of achieving their career and educational goals. This site lists state- and federal-funded programs, as well as non-profit organizations, offering support services for adults: <https://www.minnstate.edu/careerexploration/skillup/shortterm/supportservices.html>

■ Child Care Grant

The Postsecondary Child Care Grant Program helps low-income students who have young children pay for child care while the student attends classes: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?PageID=140>

ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY:

★ MATHEW, MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGE

Mathew always knew he wanted to go into the nursing field, but it was something he kept putting off as his career took him in a different direction. But thanks to reskilling resources he learned about through CareerForce, Mathew is back on a health-care career track and excited about what his career future will bring.

Mathew got his first experience in health care when he provided care for people with mental and physical disabilities at Community Living Opportunities in Overland, Kansas. He found working with his clients to be very rewarding because he liked the feeling of helping people.

After working with people with disabilities for three years, Mathew served six years in the military. He came back to the U.S. with a job opportunity with the City of Winona, but after almost a year into that position, he was laid off.

When he went to file for Unemployment Insurance, he learned of the many different programs and services provided to job seekers at his local CareerForce location in Winona.

He found his CareerForce experience to be very helpful. He was able to take advantage of their many services such as resume writing, job search tips, mock interviews and how to network. He also learned about options for those considering changing careers with help from his counselor, Autumn Herber.

When he mentioned interest in becoming a nurse, he learned the Dislocated Worker Program could help

him go back to school to achieve his dream. After getting signed up for the program, he enrolled for a Licensed Practical Nurse degree at Minnesota State College–Southeast. The Dislocated Worker Program helped pay for Mathew’s tuition and school supplies.



“When you get laid off you wonder ‘what do I do now?’, but when I worked with the people at Dislocated Worker Program, it was a game changer for me,” Mathew said.

While Mathew was enrolled in school, his supervisor was supportive of him getting his LPN. He was able to have a flexible schedule so that he could study and take his classes. After graduating in December 2020, Mathew now works as an LPN for Options Plus Home Care in Winona.

Some of the skills that Mathew used from his previous work experiences he found were easily applicable to his nursing profession, such as being flexible, working on a team and compassion for helping others.

Once he gets some experience as an LPN under his belt, he hopes to become a Registered Nurse and get his Bachelor of Science in Nursing. He also would like the opportunity to work with veterans.

PART FIVE HOW TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS FROM ADULT LEARNERS

This section includes tips and guidance on having conversations with Minnesotans 25 and older about going back to school. Conversation topics include introducing the idea of finishing a certificate or degree, letting adults know there are supports to help them complete their education or training program, addressing general questions about financial aid, and connecting educational opportunities to their career interests.

We've included statements and questions you may hear from potential adult students about their concerns regarding these topics, and our recommendations on how to respond to them. Remember: you are not expected to be an expert. Your role is to let adults know that completing a degree or credential is possible and that there are resources to support them.

“I'M AFRAID I WON'T FIT IN.”

There are more people just like you on college campuses than ever before. There are many talented and accomplished individuals who never went to college or who started but for some reason or another were not able to complete their certificate or degree. For many, earning that credential can make a significant difference in their professional and personal life, but the idea of returning to school after a long absence can present quite a challenge. Here is a look at today's college student: ⁴

- 37% of college students are 25 or older
- 46% are first-generation college students
- 40% of college students work full-time
- 24% of college students have children or other dependents
- 6% serve or have served in the U.S. armed forces

“I HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE IN COLLEGE THE FIRST TIME AROUND.”

You should know that many things have changed since you first attended college. First, you have changed. You may not have felt ready for college when you attended right out of high school, but at this point you've lived life, you have responsibilities and motivation, and you've made sacrifices along the way. That makes you more ready now than you've ever been.

Second, colleges have changed. Colleges in Minnesota are working on ways to make their campuses friendlier for adults. Many are offering support in the form of financial and academic planning, career assessments, peer advising, and web access to important campus resources such as financial aid and computer skills workshops.

⁴ <https://www.luminafoundation.org/campaign/todays-student>

“SCHOOL JUST DOESN'T FIT INTO MY LIFE RIGHT NOW.”

There has never been a better time for adults in Minnesota to complete a certificate or degree. Minnesota institutions have a variety of flexible degree options and many are focused on supporting adult learners. Employers are also looking for individuals who can demonstrate concrete skills for their higher paying positions.

“I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.”

There are many different programs and options for adults interested in furthering their education. Institutions also have flexible course and degree offerings such as online classes, accelerated programs, adult degree completion programs and branch campuses which offer more convenience to fit your schedule.

“HOW MUCH WILL COLLEGE COST, AND HOW WILL I PAY FOR IT?”

Unfortunately, there is no perfect equation to figuring out how much college will cost you. That's because your college costs will depend on what school you choose to attend, what type of credential you choose to pursue, and how much assistance you receive through scholarships and financial aid.

Be sure to check out “net price calculators” on college websites. Institutions are required to provide this information, and these calculators provide an estimate of what your college costs might actually be at that college as it takes into account grants and scholarships you may receive.

Here is an example of one such calculator from Minnesota State Community and Technical College:

<https://www.minnstate.edu/admissions/calculator/msctc.html>

“WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?”

Financial aid is intended to fill the gap between the actual price of the school and what students (and, in the case of dependents, their families) can realistically contribute from savings and income to pay for this education. This is called financial need. It allows students to attend schools that they otherwise might not be able to afford. The student, the student's family (if the student is a dependent), and taxpayers (through financial aid) share responsibility for paying for higher education.

Financial aid is available to most students and comes in three forms:

1. Financial aid you don't repay (grants and scholarships):
<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pagelD=1296>
2. Financial aid you must repay (loans):
<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pagelD=1297>
3. Financial aid you earn (work study and community or military service):
<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pagelD=1298>

Most students receive a combination of these in what's called a financial aid package that is put together by the school the student plans to attend or is attending.

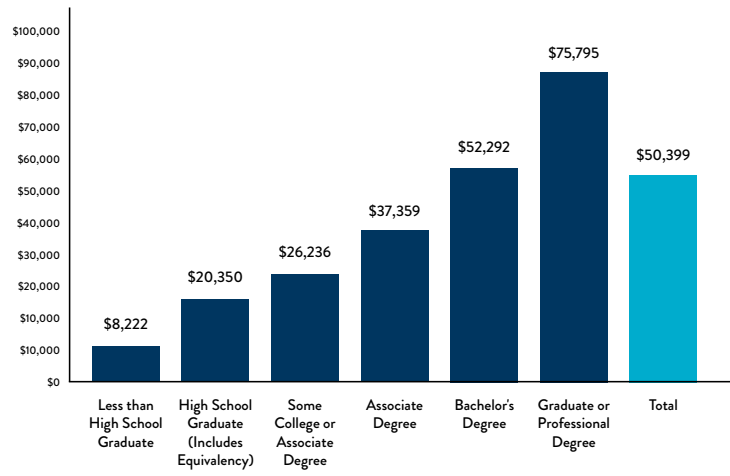
“HOW WILL CONTINUING MY EDUCATION AFFECT MY CAREER, JOB PROSPECTS, AND OTHER OUTCOMES?”

Data show that as education increases, so does income (Figure 2). Additionally, the employment rate also increases with education level (Figure 3).

Individuals with a postsecondary certificate or degree have a higher ability to withstand a poor economy with a secure job. In the country’s 2008 recession, workers with a high school education or less lost more than 5.6 million jobs, while workers with an associate degree or some college lost 1.75 million jobs. Those who already had postsecondary education also recovered more quickly from the recession. In 2015, individuals with only a high school diploma made about \$35,000. Compare this to individuals with associate degrees, who made about \$41,000, and individuals with bachelor’s degrees, who made \$59,000.⁵

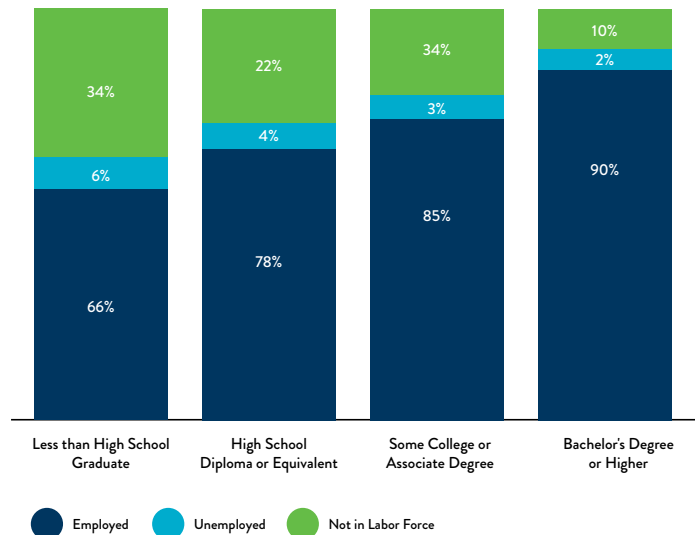
Completing an education or training program can also have a generational effect: “one-third of first-generation students dropped out of college after three years, compared to 14 percent of their peers whose parents had earned a degree.”⁶

Figure 2: Median Income Increases with Educational Attainment: Minnesotans Age 25 and Older, 2015



Note: "Some College" also includes those who completed one- or two-year certificate programs. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate

Figure 3: Employment Rate Increases with Educational Attainment: Minnesotans Age 25 to 64, 2015



Note: "Some College" also includes those who completed one- or two-year certificate programs. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate

⁵ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020>

⁶ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/08/students-postsecondary-education-arcs-affected-parents-college-backgrounds-study>

“I DON’T KNOW IF I AM READY TO RETURN TO SCHOOL.”

Going back to school as an adult can be a daunting experience, but it is also a very worthwhile one.

In fact, there are more people just like you on campuses in Minnesota than ever before. There are many talented and accomplished individuals who never went to college or for some reason or another were not able to complete their program. For many, earning a certificate or degree can make a significant difference in their professional and personal life, but the idea of returning to school after a long absence can present quite a challenge.

In Minnesota, there are many resources within your community and at our public and private institutions to help assist you in your decision and support you through to completion.

Search this map for Minnesota colleges and career schools: <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/sPages/instMap.cfm>

⁶ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/08/students-postsecondary-education-arcs-affected-parents-college-backgrounds-study>

ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY:

★ FADIL, MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Meet Fadil, a first-generation immigrant and college student who settled in Minnesota from Somalia in 2017. He became a Minneapolis College student this year, majoring in nursing. With a 3.75 GPA and a belief that “everything is possible,” Fadil impressively balances both school and work as a medical interpreter in local hospitals and clinics. His goal is to give back to the community and one day become a dentist.

“I like helping people and I dream of working at the Mayo Clinic because they are the best.” Fadil plans to transfer to Augsburg College and pursue his bachelor’s degree in nursing. “The Promise Scholarship I received from the Minneapolis College Foundation shows the good faith of the American family, people who are not related to me in any way yet want to help me succeed. Thank you for investing in me. MAHADSANID! [‘Thank you’ in Somali.]”



“

The Promise Scholarship I received from the Minneapolis College Foundation shows the good faith of the American family, people who are not related to me in any way yet want to help me succeed.

ADDENDUM EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE: MINNESOTA'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GOAL 2025

Unless otherwise noted, the information for this section comes from OHE's report "Educating for the Future 2020 Update": https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/EducatingfortheFuture2020_final.pdf. (See page 4 for the methodology for estimating attainment.)

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

In 2015, the Minnesota State Legislature set a goal to get 70 percent of Minnesotans within each racial and ethnic group (ages 25-44) to obtain a postsecondary certificate or higher by 2025 (Minn. Laws 2015 Chapter 69 Article 3 Sec. 6). Most importantly, the law also sets 30 percent and 50 percent educational attainment benchmarks for all races and ethnicities.

As the state works toward the goal of eliminating educational attainment gaps, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) is engaging with community leaders to identify ways to build momentum and strategies to bolster local support.

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed. With the vast majority of jobs across the nation requiring a postsecondary education, the State of Minnesota recognizes the need for an educational system that makes higher learning accessible across all racial and ethnic groups.

Postsecondary education and training includes all instruction provided for persons who have completed secondary education [high school] or who have discontinued secondary education and are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance.⁷

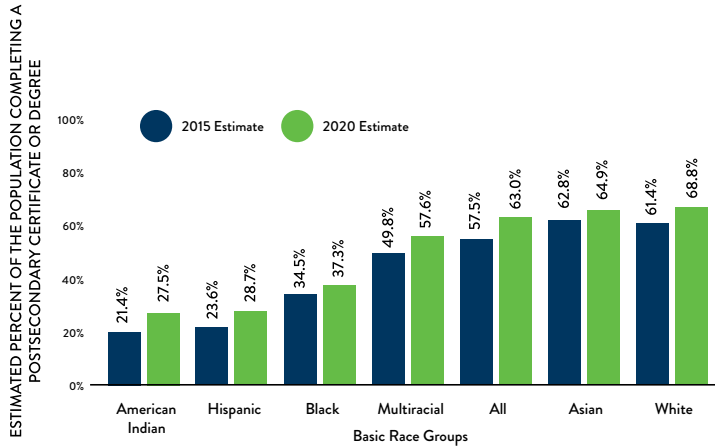
HOW CLOSE ARE WE?

Current estimates show that 62 percent of Minnesotans ages 25-44 have a postsecondary certificate or higher. White Minnesotans have the highest attainment at 68.8 percent. American Indian and Hispanic Minnesotans have the lowest attainment at 27.5 percent and 28.7 percent respectively. Both American Indian and Hispanic Minnesotans have attainment rates lower than the 30 percent benchmark established in Minnesota law.

Black Minnesotans have an attainment rate of 37.3 percent, putting them above the 30 percent benchmark, but below the 50 percent benchmark. Asian and multiracial Minnesotans have attainment rates over the 50 percent benchmark, at 64.9 percent and 57.6 percent, respectively.

⁷ National Center for Educational Statistics <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs79/79409.pdf>

Figure 4: Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2020 Estimates by Basic Race Groups

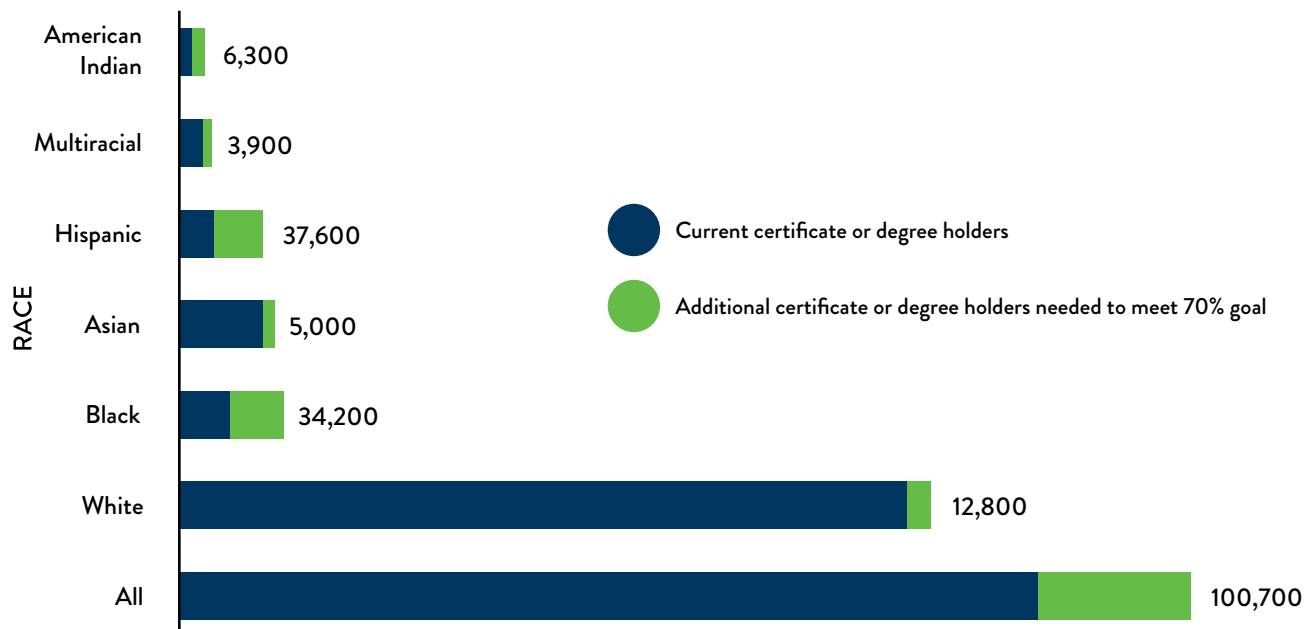


Source: IPUMS Microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2008-2012, 2014-2018), with certificate data provided by the Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and with tabulations and analysis completed by the Minnesota Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest postsecondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

In order to reach the 70% educational attainment goal, Minnesota will need an additional 100,700 persons ages 25-44 to complete a postsecondary credential by 2025. In total, persons of color or indigenous persons must earn 86% of the 100,700 additional postsecondary credentials. Of the needed credentials, 6,300 must be awarded to American Indians, 5,000 to Asians, 34,200 to Blacks, 3,900 to multiracial individuals, 37,600 to Hispanics, and 12,800 to whites (Figure 5).

View the educational attainment outcomes of your county:
<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/sPages/CoHigherEduProfile.cfm>

Figure 5: Persons with a Certificate or Higher Credential and Number Needed to Reach 70% Goal Minnesota, Age 25-44, Basic Race Groups, 2020 Estimates

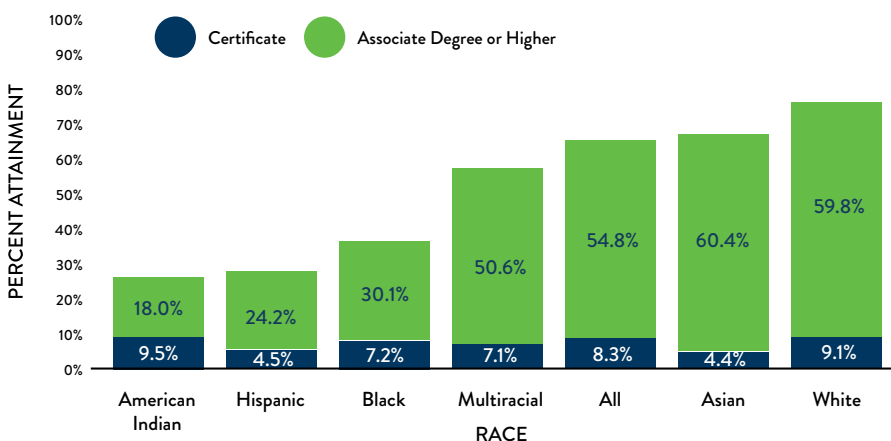


DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT WITHIN RACIAL-ETHNIC GROUPS

It's important to note that basic race categories mask the complexity of educational attainment within racial-ethnic groups. Take, for example, the attainment rates for the percentage of Minnesota's population with an associate degree or higher credential, by basic race groups (Figure 6).

- The overall Black attainment rate for an associate degree or higher credential is 30.1 percent. Black Liberians, however, have an attainment rate of 40.0 percent, while Black Somalis have an attainment rate of 17.9 percent.
- The overall Hispanic attainment rate for an associate degree or higher credential is 24.1 percent. Hispanic Salvadorans, however, have an attainment rate of 10.7 percent, while Hispanic Puerto Ricans have an attainment rate of 40.0 percent.
- Although Asian Minnesotans have an overall associate degree or higher attainment rate of 60.5 percent, Burmese Minnesotans have an attainment rate of 5.4 percent. Compare this to Indian Minnesotans, who have an attainment rate of 91.2 percent. Laotian (31.6 percent), Hmong (38.7 percent), and Cambodian (48.1 percent) Minnesotans all have attainment rates under the 50 percent benchmark. On the other hand, Vietnamese (55.6 percent), Filipino (66.0 percent), Korean (66.7 percent), and Chinese (76.0 percent) Minnesotans, as well as Minnesotans of all other Asian ethnicities (71.8 percent) have attainment rates above the 50 percent benchmark.

Figure 6: Percentage of Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2020 Estimates by Basic Race Groups



Note: Numbers in Figure 6 may not add to the totals in Figure 4 due to rounding. Source: IPUMS Microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2008-2012, 2014-2018), with certificate data provided by the Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and with tabulations and analysis completed by the Minnesota Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest postsecondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

See pages 9-11 of “Educating for the Future 2020 Update” for disaggregated attainment numbers by detailed ethnic groups for individuals who have attained an associate degree or higher credential: https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/EducatingfortheFuture2020_final.pdf

It is also important to note that the attainment estimates in Figure 4 combine certificate estimates and associate degree or higher estimates, therefore hiding disparities by credential type. For example:

- Approximately one in every eight persons ages 25-44 (13.1 percent) completed a certificate as their highest credential. For American Indians, however, one in three persons (34.1 percent) have a certificate as their highest degree credential, as shown in Table 2. American Indians in Minnesota have the highest rate of certificate completion as their highest credential compared to all other groups.
- Blacks (19.2 percent) and Hispanics (15.7 percent) also have a higher-than-average rate of certificate completion as their highest credential.
- Asians (6.8 percent) have the lowest rate of certificate completion as the highest credential earned.
- Asian Minnesotans have the highest rate of associate degree or higher attainment at 60.4 percent.
- Whites are close behind at 59.8 percent. The attainment rates for an associate degree or higher for the remaining basic race groups are: multiracial (50.6 percent), Black (30.1 percent), Hispanic (24.2 percent), and American Indian (18.0 percent).

These differences in certificate and degree completion rates reveal that American Indian, Hispanic, and Black Minnesotans are pursuing short-term credentials at a higher rate than Asian, White and multiracial Minnesotans, who have the highest rates of degree attainment.

It is critical to note that these disparities are the result of systemic inequities, not personal failures.

Table 2: Certificates Earned as a Percent of Total Credentials Earned Persons Age 25-44, Minnesota, 2020 Estimates by Basic Race Group

Basic Race Group	Certificate Holders	Associate or Higher Degree Holders	Total Persons with Credentials	Certificates Earned as a Percent of Total Credentials
American Indian	1,400	2,700	4,100	34.1%
Hispanic	4,100	22,000	26,100	15.7%
Black	7,500	31,500	39,000	19.2%
Multiracial	2,200	16,000	18,200	12.1%
All	119,300	789,300	908,600	13.1%
Asian	4,300	59,300	63,600	6.8%
White	99,800	656,600	756,400	13.2%

Note: Above table does not show or account for margins of error. Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey for Associate's or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest postsecondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the MN State Demographic Center.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Greater educational attainment correlates with increased earnings, lower unemployment, better health, and other social and economic benefits. The ability of Minnesota workers to live and raise their families in the state relies on their ability to find employment at a family-sustaining wage to cover the costs of housing, food, transportation, and childcare. These data underscore the need for measures of employment success beyond simply finding a job. Employment success and overall economic success require that Minnesotans enter the workforce and find continued ways to advance their careers to ensure they achieve a family-sustaining wage.

Given that Minnesota’s communities of color and indigenous populations fall behind whites on numerous economic outcomes, ensuring the path to family-sustaining wages for our communities of color and indigenous communities represents a moral imperative for the state.

Over 68% of jobs paying family-sustaining wages* require education and training beyond high school



*Projected total hires for occupations having a median annual wage -as of first quarter 2019- at or above a sustainable living wage for a family of three in Minnesota, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (\$55,548 for two adults and one child, with one adult working full-time and the other part-time).
 **Vocational training includes on-the-job training, apprenticeships and certificates.

Graduates with higher degrees earn more and have higher rates of full-time employment

Median wage, all employed graduates in MN in 2nd year after graduation
 Median wage, only graduates employed full-time in MN in 2nd year after graduation

