The Case for Codifying Vermont's Attainment Goal

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What is a postsecondary attainment goal?

Education and training are critical workforce and economic development tools. Postsecondary attainment goals, shaped by labor market data and projections, recognize that link by setting a target for the number of people who should complete an education and training credential after high school (certificate, industry-recognized credential, apprenticeship, college degree etc.).

Vermont's goal is that "70 percent of working age (25-64 years old) Vermonters possess a degree or credential of value by 2025." It was set in 2016 by a cross-sector group of leaders representing pk-12 education, postsecondary education and training, employers, government, non-profits, and philanthropy.

Why 70 percent by the year 2025?

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce reports that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in Vermont will require a credential or degree. The McClure Foundation predicts that 80 percent of Vermont's high-growth, high-wage jobs in the next ten years (2018-2028) will require a credential or degree. The Vermont Business Roundtable Workforce Conditions Survey consistently reports that CEOs indicate difficulty hiring skilled workers.

Furthermore, individuals with education and training after high school are more likely to be financially secure and less reliant on government programs, have healthy families, vote, and be active within their communities.

Considering those facts, urgent action is needed. Seventy percent by 2025 is an ambitious yet pragmatic goal.

Why important to codify in Vermont?

A legislatively endorsed state attainment goal formally establishes a shared agenda for educators (pk-12 and postsecondary), employers, government, non-profits, and philanthropy. As seen by the aims of state goals such as Vermont's renewable energy standards, it is important to set ambitious targets not only to establish state policy but to spur the action both within and out of government.

Across the country, codified state attainment goals have helped to advance critical education and workforce development policies and changed institutional behaviors in education and business.

With the creation of Advance Vermont, which is charged with spurring cross-sector action to increase attainment, Vermont is well poised to make progress toward the goal. Formal state support will help take efforts to the next level.

History

<u>Vermont</u>

Over the last 10 years, there have been a number of efforts and a number of goals aimed at increasing postsecondary attainment in Vermont.

- **2009:** Government and higher education leaders signed compact to increase college attainment to 60 percent by 2019
- **2010:** Act 133 established the PreK-16 Council with responsibility to coordinate efforts between the preK-12 and higher education communities to reach a new statewide goal that "at least 60 percent of the adult population will have earned an associate's or higher-level degree by 2020."
- **2016:** Cross-sector convening selects 70 percent by 2025 goal; is inclusive of credentials and college degrees
- **2017:** Governor Phil Scott endorses 70 by 2025 goal at Advance Vermont launch event

<u>Nationally</u>

The Lumina Foundation set a goal that "60% of Americans hold degrees, certificates or other high-quality postsecondary credentials by 2025." The Obama administration made the goal a policy priority.

By last count, 42 states have set an attainment goal. They have been set in several different ways, including:

- Legislation
- Executive order
- State agency policy
- Cross-sector stakeholder agreement (like Vermont)

About Advance Vermont

Advance Vermont is a statewide partnership of leaders from business, education, government, non-profits, and philanthropy with a unified goal to increase educational attainment in Vermont for the benefit of our citizens, communities and economy. Learn more about Advance Vermont by visiting <u>advancevermont.org.</u>