



WHERE

DO WE WANT TO GO?



DEFINING ATTAINMENT FOR OUR FUTURE

As noted above, there are several ways to measure attainment. In some states, attainment is calculated by counting only certain types of postsecondary degrees, but for the myFutureNC Commission, the focus has been more on identifying all of the avenues for success after high school and less on singling out specific postsecondary categories.

Therefore, myFutureNC's *definition of attainment* is having a postsecondary degree, credential, and/or certification that has current and future value in North Carolina's labor market.

Just as the concept of attainment should be more nuanced than earning a certain type of degree, an attainment *goal* should be more than just a head-count target. It should resonate with a state's current attainment context as well as a projected vision for how that context will change over time. It should address issues of equity by highlighting not only the overall attainment level of a state but also the gaps in attainment among different populations. Perhaps most importantly, it should be challenging, requiring a state to find ways to stretch beyond what would be possible through population growth alone.



AN ATTAINMENT GOAL FOR NORTH CAROLINA

NC ADULTS WITH POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL OR HIGHER

In this spirit, the myFutureNC Commission recommends the following overall statewide attainment goal:

By 2030, 2 million North Carolina residents between the ages of 25 and 44 will hold a high-quality postsecondary credential or degree.

Currently, about 1.3 million 25- to 44-year-olds (about half of the population in that age range) have met this goal. Without any changes, North Carolina is projected to have about 1.6 million residents who meet the attainment definition, which means the state will need to help an estimated 400,000 additional residents reach postsecondary attainment (Figure 5).

In addition to tracking progress toward the overall goal, the Commission recommends tracking the attainment rate for multiple populations in addition to the overall rate, so that the challenges faced by some populations are not masked by overall successes at the state level. See **Appendix B** for more details about the data behind the goal.

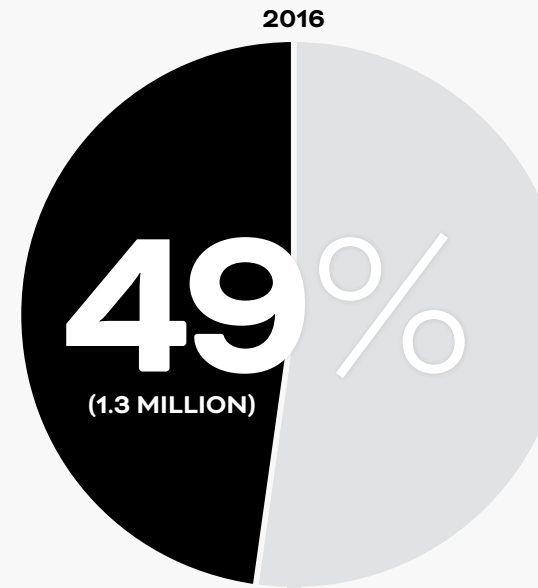
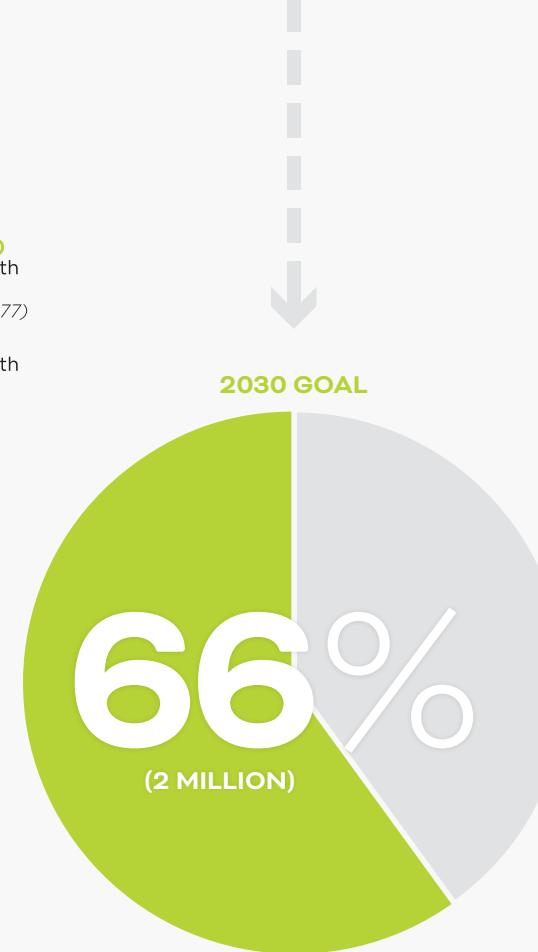
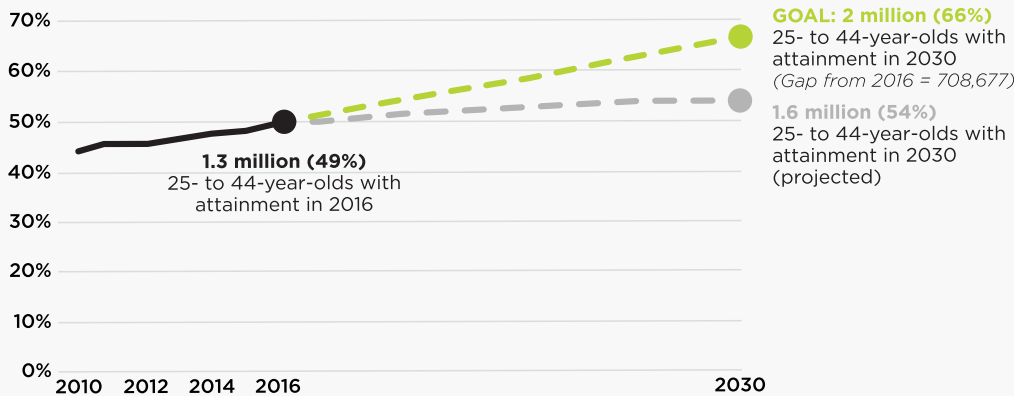


FIGURE 5. CURRENT, PROJECTED, AND TARGETED ATTAINMENT





HOW THE COMMISSION ARRIVED AT THIS GOAL

The recommended target age range and year for achieving the goal balance a desire to measure and promote ambitious, near-term improvements with the longer-time horizon required to realize systemic change across the educational spectrum. The numeric target itself reflects the myFutureNC Commission's desire to set an ambitious goalpost that will spur that change. Had the attainment goal been achieved today, North Carolina would have one of the best-educated workforces in the country. Achieving the goal by 2030 will require the state to exhibit attainment growth that exceeds the maximum growth observed in any state over the past decade (Dyke & True, 2018).

MEETING THE GOAL

In other words, while our attainment goal may be ambitious, it is also necessary. And we can meet it.

Our current 1.3 million residents who have met the attainment level defined above (about 49 percent of the population of 25- to 44-year-olds) have done so along a number of paths. About two-thirds of them have earned a bachelor's degree or higher, with the other third holding either an associate degree or a high-quality certificate.⁹ To reach 2 million by 2030, our state will need to see increases in each of those categories, but getting there will not require increasing the number of high school graduates who pursue postsecondary degrees or credentials by the estimated 400,000. Some of those 400,000 will come from the population of adults who started postsecondary programs or who want to re-enter the continuum. Even today, there are 643,000 North Carolinians between the ages of 25 and 54 who have completed at least some college courses but have yet to earn a degree (Tippett, 2017), and 39 percent of the respondents to one of our surveys indicated that they have not yet reached their desired level of educational attainment (EdNC, 2018).

9. High-quality certificates generally are defined as certificates that help the holder to earn a significant earnings premium, but the specific characteristics of a certificate that allow the holder to earn that premium can vary from state to state (Carnevale et al., 2012). High-quality certificate-holders are estimated to make up about 5 percent of the current population of 25- to 44-year-olds in North Carolina (Dyke & True, 2018). Part of myFutureNC's work in the next year will be more clearly defining and identifying data to count high-quality certificates more accurately in the North Carolina context.



As part of the next steps for our work, myFutureNC and its partners will project not only the optimal balance of postsecondary degrees and credentials, but also the fields in which those degrees and credentials are likely to be of greatest value, given parallel projections for the economic areas of highest growth in North Carolina.

BENCHMARK INDICATORS AND OUTCOME MEASURES

In addition to projecting where the greatest opportunities will be in the North Carolina of 2030, we also need to start measuring *now* the indicators that will help us determine whether we are on track to meet our goal.

ECONorthwest recommended nine educational attainment indicators¹⁰ and five workforce indicators that, considered together, illustrate the current status of North Carolina's educational pipeline. Additionally, these measures also can help track the state's progress toward its overall attainment goal and systemwide improvement in education delivery. ECONorthwest also identified 2030 targets for each education indicator to help North Carolina chart a course for reaching these ambitious goals.¹¹

In selecting indicators, ECONorthwest focused on regularly updated, publicly available data disaggregated at least by race and ethnicity. The selected education and workforce indicators highlight important milestones that in many cases link educational and workforce systems. If North Carolina reaches the selected targets, the state would rank in the top quartile among states in each area, based on present values for each indicator; overall, our education pipeline would rank among the top in the nation. As with the overall attainment goal, the indicator targets balance ambition and feasibility (Dyke & True, 2018).

10. As detailed below, the myFutureNC Commission added a tenth educational attainment indicator (5. K-12 Student Chronic Absenteeism Rate). In addition, the Commission made other changes to some of the indicators and measures based on proposals by myFutureNC Commission members; these changes are noted below and in Appendix B.

11. While the myFutureNC Commission reached consensus on the indicators and outcome measure labels, the specific data sources and target goals for each will be set during the next phase of work. All figures in this report reflect initial estimates provided to the Commission by ECONorthwest (Appendix B).



EDUCATION CONTINUUM BENCHMARK INDICATORS

The Commission recommends tracking and regularly reporting on education indicators (both in the aggregate and by subgroup), such as the ones below, to ensure that progress across education sectors will help the state meet the overall attainment goal (see **Appendix B** for more details about each indicator).

1. Enrollment in high-quality¹² pre-kindergarten (share of eligible 4-year-olds enrolled)

[The Commission amended the initially recommended measure for this indicator (**Appendix B**); revised baseline and target values will be determined as part of the next phase of work.]

Only about 22 percent of all 4-year-olds in North Carolina currently are enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program; in Florida, Vermont, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin, 72 percent or more are enrolled (Dyke & True, 2018).

2. Fourth grade NAEP proficiency¹³

38.5% → **42%**
(2017) (2029)

About 39 percent of North Carolina’s fourth-grade students score at or above proficiency on the NAEP fourth-grade reading assessment; in the state with the highest reading proficiency rate (Massachusetts), over 50 percent are proficient (Dyke & True, 2018). In 2015, only 21 percent of economically disadvantaged students demonstrated reading proficiency on the fourth-grade reading test, compared to 52 percent of their more-advantaged peers (Muschkin, 2018).

12. Definition of “high-quality” to be determined as part of the next phase of the work.

13. Projections available only for NAEP fourth-grade reading (see Appendix B); projections for NAEP fourth-grade mathematics to be determined as part of the next phase of the work.



3. Eighth grade NAEP proficiency¹⁴

34.8% → **42%**
(2017) (2029)

About 35 percent of North Carolina's eighth-grade students score at or above proficiency on the NAEP eighth-grade mathematics assessment; in Massachusetts, the proportion is again about 50 percent (Dyke & True, 2018).

4. Share of ACT test takers with composite mean score of 17 or above

58.8% → **70%**
(2017) (2029)

Overall, North Carolina students currently appear to perform well on this measure (about 59 percent), but that number masks significant discrepancies. In 2016-17, while 73 percent of white students scored at or above 17, only 35 percent of black students and 44 percent of Hispanic students met that mark (Lauen & Tomberlin, 2018). In addition, almost half (47 percent) fail to meet any of the ACT's four college-ready benchmarks (Sims & Siddiqi, 2018), and of the 17 states with 100 percent participation rates, North Carolina ranks only 14th (Edmunds, 2018).

5. P-12 student chronic absenteeism rate (percent of students identified as chronically absent/year)

[The Commission recommended this indicator after completion of the *Attainment Goal and Performance Indicators Technical Report* (**Appendix B**); baseline and target values will be determined as part of the next phase of work. The North Carolina State Board of Education recently approved a definition of chronic absenteeism (February 2018),¹⁵ which will inform initial baseline and target estimates for this indicator.]

14. Projections available only for NAEP eighth-grade mathematics (see Appendix B); projections for NAEP eighth-grade mathematics to be determined as part of the next phase of the work.

15. North Carolina State Board of Education Policy ATND-004, Definition of Student Chronic Absenteeism Rate: <https://stateboard.ncpublicschools.gov/policy-manual/student-attendance/definition-of-chronic-absence-and-chronic-absenteeism-rate>



6. Five-year cohort high school graduation rate

87.5% → **95%**
(2018) (2030)

North Carolina is a leader among states on this measure, with nearly 88 percent of all students graduating within five years; however, that number has flatlined since 2016 (Dyke & True, 2018).

7. Share of qualified high school seniors completing the FAFSA

[The Commission amended the initially recommended measure for this indicator (**Appendix B**); revised baseline and target values will be determined as part of the next phase of work.]

North Carolina's current rate is about 59 percent statewide (Dyke & True, 2018), with lower rates of completion in 52 of 115 school districts in 2017 (Edmunds, 2018).

8. Postsecondary enrollment rate (ages 18-24)

40% → **47%**
(2016) (2030)

North Carolina's current rate of about 40 percent is significantly higher than some states and is about on par with the national average (41 percent) but is well below rates in Rhode Island (55 percent) and Massachusetts (53 percent; Dyke & True, 2018).

9. Postsecondary persistence rate

76.6% → **80%**
(2016) (2030)

Persistence, or the rate at which postsecondary students enroll for a second year, has slowly increased over time in North Carolina (from 73 percent in 2009 to 77 percent in 2016) and is close to the rates in the highest-performing states (South Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, with rates between 82 percent and 85 percent; Dyke & True, 2018).



10. Postsecondary completion rate (ages 25-44) for two-year, public four-year, and private four-year institutions¹⁶

Two-Year¹⁷



Four-Year Public



Four-Year Private



North Carolina's rates currently hover near (two-year, private four-year) or exceed (public four-year) rates in other states (Dyke & True, 2018).

LABOR MARKET BENCHMARK OUTCOME MEASURES

In addition, the Commission recommends tracking and regularly reporting on labor market supply and demand outcome measures (both in the aggregate and by subgroup), such as the ones below, to ensure that progress toward the goal is having a positive impact on the state's social, educational, and economic well-being (see **Appendix B** for more details about each outcome measure;¹⁸ targets have not yet been set for these measures):

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- 16. Both on-time (within two years for a two-year degree, and within four years for a four-year degree) and within-time (within three years for a two-year degree, and within six years for a four-year degree) measures.
 - 17. A more complex definition of "completion" for the community college sector—which provides its students with market-valued credentials via a number of paths in addition to the standard two-year degree pathway—will be determined during the next phase of the work.
 - 18. Current baseline values are available only for measures 1 and 2; establishment of current baseline values for measures 3 through 7 to be determined as part of the next phase of work.



1. Share of 16- to 24-year-olds engaged in the school-to-workforce continuum

- *Current (2016): 86%*
- In 2016, 86 percent of North Carolinians between the ages of 16 and 24 were connected in some way to the school-to-workforce continuum, but even a rate that high placed North Carolina at only about the 25th percentile among all states (Dyke & True, 2018).

2. Labor force participation rate for 25- to 64-year-olds

- *Current (2016): 76 percent*
- This current rate also appears to be high, but again ranks only at about the 25th percentile among all states (Dyke & True, 2018).

3. Share of 35- to 44-year-olds with family income at or above a living wage¹⁹

[The Commission amended the initially recommended measure for this indicator (**Appendix B**); revised baseline and target values will be determined as part of the next phase of work.]

Almost three in ten (29 percent) of the respondents to one of our surveys reported that they are either “Finding it Difficult to Get By” or “Just Getting By” financially (EdNC, 2018).

4. Current workforce demand compared to supply of graduates by market sector category

- Workforce demand should emphasize “high-quality jobs,” which will be defined as part of the next phase of work.
- Workforce demand should track job openings both for existing companies and for companies the state is seeking to attract.

5. Forecasted workforce demand compared to supply of graduates by market sector category

- Forecasts for workforce demand should emphasize “high-quality jobs,” which will be defined as part of the next phase of work.
- Forecasts for workforce demand should include job openings related to state economic development goals.

19. Specific definition of “Living Wage” to be determined; see, for instance, this location-based measure: <http://livingwage.mit.edu>.