



Alabama *Success Plus* Attainment Goal Progress: 2018–2021

Special Population
Attainment Report



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Executive Summary

The goals set by Alabama’s Workforce Council and Governor Ivey in 2018 require inclusion of all Alabamians in the benefits of *Success Plus*’s transformational education and workforce development initiatives. This includes engaging populations with low labor force participation and barriers to work. Individuals in these groups may require targeted support to access Alabama’s pathways to post-secondary education and careers.

Measuring progress toward the *Success Plus* credential attainment goals for specific populations will require new data collection and analysis. There is currently too little data available on the populations that face the greatest barriers and their credential attainment to assess their progress toward the *Success Plus* goals statewide. For this report, the research team consulted 14 state agencies and reviewed data from seven of these agencies. This process helped identify what data is available and how it could be used to measure credential attainment for 16 special populations identified in the *Success Plus* plan.

An extensive review of the available data identified strengths and opportunities related to collecting and reporting further information that will help the state accurately measure credential attainment by individuals included in 16 special populations in the future. The following recommendations are provided to advance progress in data collection and analysis in the short- and long-term:

- Use the currently available data to measure the first credential attainment of Alabamians by demographic group;
- Produce reports that invite innovation in credentialing efforts;
- Increase the capacity for data analysis across state agencies;
- Continue work to integrate data systems across education and workforce agencies;
- Prioritize data collection and analysis that answers key policy questions;
- Align and integrate data systems across education and workforce agencies; and
- Continue to increase access to postsecondary education, training, and credential pathways for Special Population groups.

Much work remains in the development of critical data infrastructure and reporting capabilities of state education and workforce agencies in Alabama. With leadership and commitment to transformational policies by Governor Ivey and the Alabama Workforce Council, and data-informed decision-making practices by agency leadership, meeting the *Success Plus* attainment goals for all Alabamians is well within reach.

Introduction

¹ Alabama Workforce Council. (2018). *AlabamaWorks! Success Plus: Preparing Alabama's Workforce for Opportunity & Growth*. <https://alabamaworks.com/successplus/>

² Credential Engine. (2022). *Alabama's Success Plus Attainment Goal Progress: Statewide and Regional Attainment, 2018-2021*. Washington, DC: Credential Engine.

³ Hunt, D. V., Layton, D., & Prince, S. (2015). *Diversity Matters* McKinsey&Company. (24). <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

⁴ Glassdoor. (2020). *Diversity & Inclusion Workplace Survey*. <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/glassdoors-diversity-and-inclusion-workplace-survey/>

⁵ Delta Regional Authority, (2021). *Labor Market and Workforce Report*. https://dra.gov/images/uploads/content_files/DRA_laborMarketReport22_review-5.pdf

Alabama state and industry leaders are committed to broadening the talent pool available to Alabama businesses by increasing credentialing and labor force participation. In 2018, Alabama's *Success Plus Plan* set goals to increase the qualifications of the state's workforce and improve economic outcomes, including a goal to increase the number of credentialed people in Alabama by 500,000 people by 2025.¹ That goal is already within reach: between 2018–2021, 214,922 Alabamians attained their first credential in the form of a degree, certificate, certification, license, or apprenticeship certificate of completion.²

Governor Ivey, the Alabama Workforce Council, and policymakers recognize that continued progress toward the *Success Plus* goals requires intentional focus on the equity imperative to include all Alabamians, including populations that experience barriers to training and employment. A broader, more diverse, and well-educated workforce that includes these populations would allow businesses to grow, adopt new technologies, earn higher profits,³ create new jobs, and gain an advantage in recruiting and retaining highly skilled employees in the future.⁴ But new policies and programs may be needed to achieve these outcomes.

The first step toward assessing credentialing trends for populations facing barriers to education and work is to examine trends by specific demographic groups. For example, a 2021 report by the Delta Regional Authority found that women in the broader Lower Mississippi and Black Belt region are more likely to be discouraged from seeking employment and make less money than their male counterparts when they are employed.⁵ Black women and Black men both have higher rates of unemployment than their White counterparts. People with a disability have very low labor force participation (22% compared to 66% among their able-bodied counterparts). When people with a disability seek work, they are unlikely to find it in a context of 12% unemployment; and those who do find work are paid less. There is limited support available to low-income parents; struggles in finding childcare and stable housing are also restricting participation in the workforce.

When implemented successfully, data collection and analysis regarding credentialing programs can help policymakers identify opportunities to improve and expand programming. To reach the broader goals of a stronger economy and greater economic prosperity for all Alabamians, state and local leaders and their industry partners need data to track and assess policies, programs, and practices that engage people in the 16 Special Populations described in the *Success Plus Plan*.

Approach

6 A complete list of agencies that contributed to this report is included in the Appendix.

7 Definitions of each credential are included in the Appendix.

Since 2018, state agencies have been engaged in accounting for progress by key sub-populations. While much progress has been made, agency leaders face continued difficulties reporting credential attainment information by each of the 16 Special Population groups.

The Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Transformation and 14 state agencies in Alabama provided the information on credential completers contained in this report.⁶ Many of these agencies also offered insights into the status of the state’s credentialing systems and the resulting credentialed population.

Measuring First Credential Attainment

Meeting the *Success Plus* goal of increasing the credentialed population in Alabama involves moving people from an uncredentialed status to a credentialed status. For the purposes of this report, a person who is credentialed has attained a degree, certificate, industry certification, or professional license, or completed an apprenticeship.⁷ Many people in Alabama already have one of these credentials. The goal of this report was to identify and count newly credentialed individuals who are included in each of the Special Populations.

Given the focus on measuring individuals who earned their first credential in the past four years, rather than all completions of degrees, certificates, and other programs in the state, this report relies on information about individuals and their education histories provided by federal and state education and workforce agencies. The education history of completers helps us to limit the count to individuals who earned their first post-secondary credential.

SUCCESS PLUS Special Populations

- Displaced Homemakers
- Low-Income Individuals
- American Indians, Alaskan Natives, or Native Hawaiians
- People with Disabilities
- Older Individuals (ages 55–64)
- Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
- Homeless Individuals
- Youth Aged Out of the Foster System
- Individuals with Low Levels of Literacy, are English Language Learners, or have Substantial Cultural Barriers
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Individuals Nearing TANF Exhaustion
- Single Parents
- Youth with Parents in Active-Duty Military
- Unemployed or Underemployed Individuals
- Long-Term Unemployed Individuals
- Veterans

Credential Attainment Data Available

For this report, data was gathered from multiple state education and workforce agencies and assessed for whether it allowed for the identification of first-time credential attainment, and whether it identified any of the Special Populations. Data from seven Alabama agencies were reviewed:

- Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)
- Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL)
- Adult Education Programs (Adult Ed)
- Alabama Rehabilitation Services (ARS)
- Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)
- Alabama Technology Network (ATN)
- Ingram State Technical College (ISTC)

Data from the Employment and Training Administration in the U.S. Department of Labor was used to examine participation in Alabama's workforce development board programs and apprenticeships registered through the Office of Apprenticeship.



Credential Attainment Tracking by State Agencies

The *Success Plus Plan* goal of adding 500,000 highly qualified workers can only be achieved through the inclusion of all Alabamians in education and credentialing efforts. The Governor’s efforts to meet this “equity imperative” requires intentional outreach and support for diverse and underserved groups of people. 16 Special Populations were identified in the *Success Plus Plan*.

Most state agencies were able to report credential attainment information by race and ethnicity for their students and participants. However, state agencies face continued difficulties reporting credential attainment information by many of the 16 Special Population groups.

Critical information on first-time credential attainment for the 16 Special Populations is inconsistently available across state agencies. Much work remains to be done to develop the data infrastructure and reporting capabilities of state education and workforce agencies to provide policymakers the data necessary to assess progress in credentialing.

Special populations that have no attainment data available include:

- displaced homemakers;
- formerly incarcerated individuals;
- migrant and seasonal farmworkers;
- single parents;
- youth who have aged out of the foster care system; and
- youth with active-duty military parents.

⁸ Details on specific challenges and data limitations for a selection of the Special Populations are included in the Appendix.

Current reporting challenges stem from limitations in data collection, storage, retrieval, cleaning, and interpretation across 14 relevant state agencies.⁸ Since no regular reporting processes require the agencies to test and improve the systems necessary to track progress toward the 2024 goals described in the *Success Plus Plan*, there are few opportunities to make incremental progress and address issues. The data review process for this report identified strengths and opportunities for agency leadership, summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Strengths and Opportunities of Alabama’s Education and Workforce Development Agencies For Measurement of Credential Attainment by the 16 *Success Plus* Special Populations

State Education or Workforce Agency	Strengths	Opportunities
Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)	<p>The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) coordinates all public universities and colleges in the state. These institutions of higher education report data on their students and programs to ACHE each semester. Institutions report separately to the U.S. Department of Education.⁹ Most of the credentials earned in Alabama from 2018 to 2021 were awarded by universities and colleges in the ACHE system.</p>	<p>The aging data infrastructure at the agency is a stumbling block that prevents state policymakers from developing an understanding of how many first-time credentials have been earned by each Special Population group identified in the <i>Success Plus</i> goals.</p> <p>All public universities and colleges report the number of students who use need-based financial aid (a common indicator for low-income students) to the U.S. Department of Education. However, the ACHE data system does not have the capacity to collect this need-based financial aid data. As a result, understanding the attainment of low-income students across the state is not possible. Agency and state policymakers should continue to support ongoing efforts to update and modernize the legacy ACHE data systems.</p>
Ingram State Technical College (ISTC)	<p>As of July 2022, ISTC has taken responsibility for implementation and administration of all for-credit programs offered at state detention facilities. Centralization of these systems will improve the opportunities for making data-informed decisions for the incarcerated population of Alabama.</p>	<p>ISTC, like the other community colleges in Alabama, does not report completion data for most non-credit programs. Tracking the participation and credentials earned through these programs is an important step toward understanding the extent to which incarcerated individuals in state facilities are engaging with available education and training opportunities.</p>

⁹ Institutions report to the U.S. Department of Education the total number of students who use either a Pell Grant or Subsidized Stafford Loan at any point in their education.

TABLE 1: Strengths and Opportunities of Alabama’s Education and Workforce Development Agencies For Measurement of Credential Attainment by the 16 *Success Plus* Special Populations

State Education or Workforce Agency	Strengths	Opportunities
Alabama Community College System (ACCS)	<p>The Alabama Community College System (ACCS), under the jurisdiction of ACHE, is undergoing data modernization efforts to capture information about non-credit education programs at community colleges.</p> <p>This is an important initiative for developing and reporting on the credentialed population of Alabama because community colleges are key actors in the delivery of non-degree credentials, with enormous potential to serve hard-to-reach groups of people.</p>	<p>ACCS is developing a new data system for schools to collect and report data on non-credit education programs. This initiative should be supported across all state education and workforce agencies because the non-credit system and its related data can be used or connected to a variety of ACCS-affiliated agencies, including ACHE, ATN, ISTC, Adult Ed, and ALSDE. In the meantime, no data on non-credit programs are available for any population served by those agencies.</p>
Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)	<p>Career and technical education (CTE) programs in Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) are key to meeting the <i>Success Plus</i> credential attainment goal. ALSDE collects the greatest detail on their students and the credentials they earn, more than any other agency that collaborated in this research.</p> <p>CTE programs are the largest producers of industry-recognized certifications in the state. As such, the instructors and school facilities are vital to the development of Alabama’s working-age credentialed population.</p>	<p>Given the detailed data available, there are immediate opportunities for data to inform action. For example, schools can only provide programs for which they have qualified teachers and adequate facilities. As a result, certifications earned currently relate to only a limited number of industries and occupations. Further analysis of the ALSDE data can align industry needs (informed by ATN and ADOL data) with teacher recruitment and training and facility investments.</p>
Alabama Rehabilitation Services (ARS)	<p>Alabama Rehabilitation Services is the only agency able to follow their participants through multiple education and work-related agencies and activities and assess long-term outcomes of these activities.</p>	<p>The staff of this small agency has wide-ranging responsibilities and demands on their time and attention. These mission-driven professionals are highly motivated to support credential attainment by the individuals they support, including members of nearly all 16 Special Populations. Limited staff capacity for data analysis creates barriers to the development of new data reporting and sharing strategies.</p>

TABLE 1: Strengths and Opportunities of Alabama’s Education and Workforce Development Agencies For Measurement of Credential Attainment by the 16 *Success Plus* Special Populations

State Education or Workforce Agency	Strengths	Opportunities
Alabama Department of Commerce, AIDT	As a division of the Alabama Department of Commerce, AIDT provides a full range of customized technical training programs that are offered at no cost to employers or trainees. AIDT has strong connections to industry in the state and well-developed internal operations for public outreach and communications.	AIDT does not collect any data on the individuals who participate in their trainings. Combined with its strong network communications capacity, AIDT could leverage data collected to highlight worker successes and encourage further participation by private employers.
Adult Education Programs (Adult Ed)	<p>Adult Ed collects detailed data on participants and credentials earned. Policymakers can use these data to identify programmatic strengths and encourage replication of successful models in similar programs.</p> <p>Additionally, Adult Ed collects extensive data on Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) which include certificates of completion that do not meet the WIOA¹⁰ definitions of specific credentials, but do increase the work-related qualifications of the student.</p>	<p>Adult Ed shares data on their programs with other state agencies through a data dashboard. Similar dashboards with aggregated data could support decision-making.</p> <p>Adult Ed implemented an online work-ready training that is available for free to all Alabamians. Data about completers of the program collected for the purposes of building the Talent Triad should also track students, the circumstances in which they enroll and complete, and connect to ATLAS. Data collected can support state policymakers in efforts to replicate, scale up, and make improvements to the program to benefit all Alabamians.</p>
Alabama Technology Network (ATN)	The Alabama Technology Network (ATN) is administered by ACCS and partners with Alabama businesses to train employees for industry certifications and licenses. They have direct access to information about industry-recognized credentials and skills in demand by employers. These connections are an important element in the development of the Talent Triad.	ATN does not have systems to track the individuals who attend their training courses, or the related credentials attained. The current data collection details the contracts with businesses and whether minimum attendance has been met. This results in a gap in understanding of the state’s labor needs, labor supply, and credential attainment. More detailed reporting systems could inform state policymakers about industry-priority skills and opportunities to support training needs of businesses and people across the state.

¹⁰ Adult Ed is a WIOA program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Other WIOA programs consulted in this report include ARS and WDD. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. H.R.803, Section3(24). (2018). <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>

TABLE 1: Strengths and Opportunities of Alabama’s Education and Workforce Development Agencies For Measurement of Credential Attainment by the 16 *Success Plus* Special Populations

State Education or Workforce Agency	Strengths	Opportunities
Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) and Licensing Boards	<p>The Alabama Department of Labor is a coordinating agency that collects data on 150 types of licenses from 68 independent licensing agencies in the state. The resulting data is effective in building an understanding of the industries, occupations, and locations of more than 174,000 licensed professionals in the state.</p>	<p>ADOL does not have authority to collect information from state license boards to understand trends over time or the individuals who are licensed. Two data points, highest education level and license status (i.e., new, renewed, stacked, cancelled, or reactivated), could allow for insights into changes in the credentialed population across industries and geographies.</p> <p>Information on special populations would help identify if there are barriers to attainment of licenses, for example, for veterans who were trained and credentialed through their military experience. Creating an information sharing process for licenses between the military and Alabama licensing boards would help support the credential attainment of this Special Population.</p>
Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA)	<p>The Office of Apprenticeship (AOA) is building and supporting important work-based learning (WBL) programs across the state, including innovative dual-enrollment apprenticeships and cooperative on-the-job training programs. The <i>WBL Handbook</i>¹¹ is an important step in supporting informed decision-making to improve this credentialing pathway.</p>	<p>All registered apprenticeships are reported by AOA to the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship. This includes information on the people who enroll and complete registered apprenticeships but does not represent the work-based learning and credentialing landscape in the state. As AOA conducts its planned inventory of WBL programs, agency leaders can consider how data on programs and credentials could complement the apprenticeship data available by race and ethnicity for a better understanding of how to increase participation.</p>

11 Alabama Office Apprenticeship (2022). *Work-based Learning Handbook*. <https://www.alapprentice.org/>

TABLE 1: Strengths and Opportunities of Alabama’s Education and Workforce Development Agencies For Measurement of Credential Attainment by the 16 *Success Plus* Special Populations

State Education or Workforce Agency	Strengths	Opportunities
Alabama Department of Commerce, Workforce Development Division (WDD)	Seven regional workforce boards implement federal WIOA programs and reach many thousands of Alabamians through through the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Employment services. The published WIOA data includes key details, including credential attainment for individual completers, age, previous education level, and workforce development region, as well as other details on a person’s race or ethnicity and their employment, disability, and veteran statuses.	The WDD administers seven regional workforce development boards. Five boards share program systems and infrastructure. Two others operate independently. This structure presents an opportunity to identify program features and practices in the different systems that impact equitable access and outcomes for the 16 Special Populations. Findings may be applied to other education and workforce development agencies.

First Credential Attainment by Demographic Group

Race and Ethnicity of Alabama's Population

Alabama has a majority White, Not Hispanic population and a significant Black or African American, Not Hispanic population with just over a quarter of Alabamians identifying as the latter. The second largest minority group in Alabama are Hispanic or Latino; at 5%, this is a low number among southern states. A final combined 4% identify as Not Hispanic and either Asian; American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander; or Multiple Races.

TABLE 2: 2021 Alabama Population, Ages 15-64, By Race and Ethnicity

Demographic Group	Alabama Population, Ages 15-64, 2021	Percent of Population Ages 15-64
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	21,089	1%
Multiple Races, Not Hispanic	43,283	1%
Asian, Not Hispanic	54,263	2%
All Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	148,430	5%
Black or African American, Not Hispanic	885,805	27%
White, Not Hispanic	2,072,160	64%
TOTAL	3,225,030	100%

Source: Population Estimate Program. (2022). *Annual county resident population estimates by characteristics*. U.S. Census Bureau.

Credential Attainment by Demographic Group

Information on race and ethnicity was included in all seven data sets reviewed for this report. This data was used to identify likely first attainments of post-secondary credentials representing a newly credentialed individual.¹³

Table 3 shows likely first post-secondary credentials attained by each race or ethnicity group. Included in this tally are first attainments of degrees, certificates, certifications, licenses, and apprenticeships from 2018–2021.

TABLE 3: Number of First Post-secondary Credential Attainments by Race and Ethnicity, 2018–2021

Population	Degrees	Certificates	Certifications	Licenses	Apprenticeships	Total	Percent of All Credentials Attained
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	762	1,236	30	354	12	2,394	2%
Asian, Not Hispanic	2,362	780	25	192	4	3,363	2%
Multiple Races, Not Hispanic	2,833	522	124	4	2	3,485	2%
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	4,376	1,310	187	93	52	6,018	4%
Black or African American, Not Hispanic	21,217	10,244	1,447	1,069	281	34,258	23%
White, Not Hispanic	79,975	17,183	1,795	709	1,206	100,868	67%
Total	111,525	31,275	3,608	2,421	1,557	150,386	100%

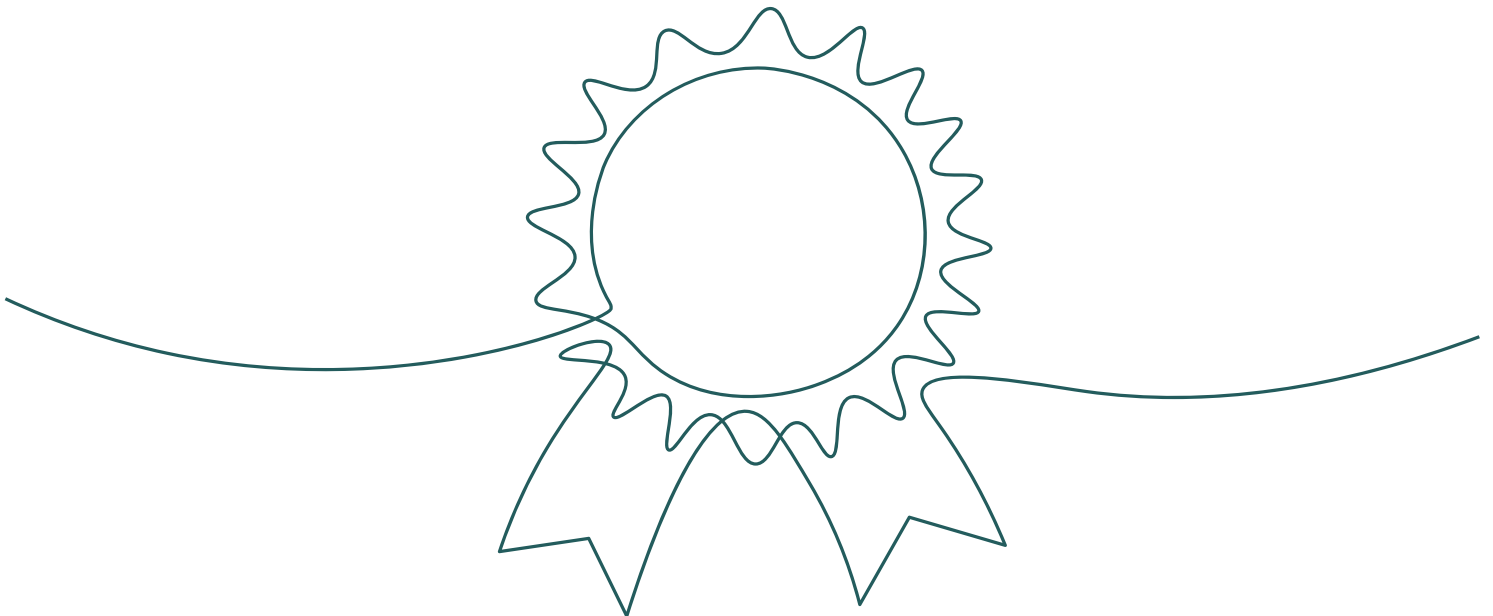
If education, training, and employment opportunities were equally distributed across all race and ethnicity groups, then the proportions of credentials attained by each group would mirror that group's proportion of the state's population. In fact, the data show a fairly even distribution of credentials across these groups. When all credential types are aggregated, as in the right-most column in Table 3, the resulting proportions closely mirror the population proportion of each demographic group in the total Alabama population. Table 4 below places these figures next to one another for comparison.

¹³ Data from ALSDE is not included in this section on credential attainment. CTE attainment by demographic group is presented in Appendix H.

TABLE 4: Comparison of Total First Credential Attainments by Race and Ethnicity, with Overall Population Proportions, 2018-2021

Population	Total First Credentials Attained	Percent of All Credentials Attained	Percent of Alabama Population, Ages 15-64
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	2,394	2%	1%
Asian, Not Hispanic	3,363	2%	1%
Multiple Races, Not Hispanic	3,485	2%	2%
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	6,018	4%	5%
Black or African American, Not Hispanic	34,258	23%	27%
White, Not Hispanic	100,868	67%	64%
Total	150,386	100%	100%

While the proportions (percent of all credentials attained and percent of Alabama population) are close, there are some discrepancies. The percentage of first attainments is highest for the White population (67%) and slightly higher than the statewide population distribution (64%). Conversely, the percentage of first attainments for Black or African American adults (24%) is lower than the statewide population distribution (27%).



Analysis by Demographic Group and Credential Type

The comparison looks very different when credentials are disaggregated by type: credential attainment results are not proportional across race and ethnicity groups when considering different types of credentials attained. Table 5 shows the proportion of degree and non-degree credentials, including certificates, certifications, licenses, and apprenticeships, attained by each race and ethnicity group along with the group's proportion of the state population.

The White, Not Hispanic group is 64% of the population, and students in this group attain 72% of all degrees, but only 54% of all non-degree credentials in 2021. The Black or African American, Not Hispanic group is 27% of the population; students in this group attain 19% of all degrees and 33% of all non-degree credentials. American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders group is 1% of the population; students in this group attain 1% of degrees and 4% of non-degree credentials.

TABLE 5: Percent Of Degrees And Nondegree Credentials Attained By Demographic Groups, 2018-2021, Compared With Share Of Alabama Population, 2021

Demographic Group	Percent of Degrees Attained	Percent of non-degree credentials attained	Percent of State Population (15–64)
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	1%	4%	1%
Multiple Races, Not Hispanic	2%	3%	2%
Asian, Not Hispanic	3%	2%	1%
All Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	4%	4%	5%
Black or African American, Not Hispanic	19%	33%	27%
White, Not Hispanic	72%	54%	64%

The different attainment rates by credential type may be due to differences in program recruitment, enrollment, and access; location of program offerings and area demographics; other barriers to participation; and factors outside of the education and training offerings that impact participation.

Caution in Accounting Methods:

Alternative Numbers

Would the credential attainment results be different if we used a different method? Table 6 shows an alternative accounting method for reference: the number of people who identify with each racial group, with people of multiple races and Hispanic counted in all categories with which they identify. Using this *maximum identification* method, about 200,000 individuals identify with multiple categories and are counted more than once.

Note that all category results are higher in Table 6 due to individuals in the “multiple races” and “Hispanic or Latino” categories shown in Table 2 are now also counted in other categories. This *maximum identification* method is especially important to consider when measuring attainment of the *Success Plus* Special Population of American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders. Table 6 shows the American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islanders population as more than twice as large as in the standard counting method (Table 2).

TABLE 6: Alternative Numbers Demonstration: Individuals in Alabama who identify as each race or ethnicity, either alone or in combination, (ages 18-64), 2021.

Demographic Group	Individuals identified, Ages 15-64, 2021
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander, any ethnicity	52,189
Asian, any ethnicity	67,336
Hispanic or Latino, any race	148,430
Black or African American, any ethnicity	917,001
White, any ethnicity	2,239,923

Source: Population Estimate Program. (2022). *Annual county resident population estimates by characteristics*. U.S. Census Bureau.

21,089

Alabamians describe themselves ONLY as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islanders. (Table 2)

31,100

more Alabamians are part of this group AND another demographic.

52,189

people in this Special Population have been recognized using maximum identification. (Table 6)

Discussion

Members of groups identified as Special Populations in the *Success Plus* Plan face barriers to post-secondary education, training, and employment. Data collection and analysis can support the improvement of programs aiming to serve these populations and help assess the effectiveness of programmatic changes, resulting in increased numbers of Alabamians who earn credentials and contribute to the highly qualified workforce of the state. Key challenges include 1) the collection of information on the 16 Special Population categories across all relevant agencies; 2) identifying individuals who are participating in multiple programs by connecting and analyzing data across agencies; and 3) interpreting and reducing missing data.

Intersecting Special Population Categories

14 Li, X., Kim, Y. H., Keum, B. T. H., Wang, Y.-W., & Bishop, K. (2022). A Broken Pipeline: Effects of Gender and Racial/Ethnic Barriers on College Students' Educational Aspiration—Pursuit Gap. *Journal of Career Development*, 49(4), 753–768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845321994196>

15 Sharpe, R.V. (2019). "Disaggregating data by race allows for more accurate research." *Natural Human Behavior* 3, 1240. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0696-1>

The 16 Special Populations identified by *Success Plus* all experience significant barriers to education and employment. Individuals may be included in one or multiple Special Population groups, but some state agencies only collect information on one Special Population category.

Barriers to education, training, and credential programs are likely compounded for people who are included in more than one Special Population group.¹⁴ But data collection and reporting typically only focuses on one or a few groups and may underestimate or miss opportunities and resources best suited to support attainment of a first credential.¹⁵ Meanwhile, some agencies that collect more detailed information on Special Population categories do not collect detailed information on credential attainment.

Accounting for Special Population Credential Attainment Across Agencies

Common data collection and reporting standards could improve the data available to policymakers regarding how special populations participate in education, training, and credentialing. But state agency administrators and data managers have varying interpretations of the category definitions and different experiences of collecting and reporting this information. State and federal privacy protection laws and regulations inform what, how, when, and in what format data can be shared and can create confusion and varying interpretations. This can cause delays in sharing credential attainment data.

For example, a participant in programming may fit into multiple categories (as described above, an older individual, unemployed, and a single parent, low income, nearing TANF exhaustion, and a veteran), but none may be recorded. If they earned a certificate through Adult Ed, they would be counted in six Special Populations through that agency's detailed participant tracking system. However, if that same person earned a certificate through a public university, they would be counted only as an older adult. Because the systems are separate, the adult education participation could not be linked to the public university participation and the different approaches to recording and tracking participation would have to be reconciled before data could be aggregated for the bigger picture results of participation and credential completion.



A person who is 56 years old (an “older individual”), a single parent, low income, nearing TANF exhaustion, unemployed and a veteran has many barriers to education and employment and is included in six Special Populations.

Interpreting Special Population Credential Attainment Data

Where data is limited, such as in credential attainment for Special Populations, low reporting numbers may be due to lack of participation in programming or to missing data. When information is available, it is important to consider the extent to which reporting is valid and reliable, especially when data collection depends on self-identification by participants or interpretation by frontline program administrators.

For example, if numbers are low, it may be due to individuals from Special Population groups seeking credentialing services at private and non-profit organizations not connected to government services and thus not appearing in the data. Some statuses, such as youth aged-out of the foster system and justice-involved juveniles, are protected by federal confidentiality laws and any detailed information on people in these populations are unlikely to be shared without clear agreements.

Misidentification and misreporting can be reduced if categories are well-defined, the importance of the information collection is clearly communicated, and participants believe the information will be used effectively to improve services. For some populations (e.g., people with disabilities, displaced homemakers, or low-income earners) definitions vary across state agencies. Even when a single definition is applied, it is difficult to predict whether respondents will identify with the definition or if the information they provide will be interpreted correctly.¹⁶ Additionally, unintentional biases in self-identification create barriers to complete data collection (e.g. for migrant workers or youth aging out of foster care); these include fear of reprisal, stigma, and other social or societal pressures.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dunham, K., Paprocki, A., Grey, C., Sattar, S., Roemer, G. (2020). *Change and Continuity in the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under WIOA. Mathematica and Social Policy Research.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.mathematica.org/-/media/publications/pdfs/labor/2020/eta_wioastudy_adultdw.pdf

¹⁷ Althubaiti, A. (2015). Information bias in health research: definition, pitfalls, and adjustment methods. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 9, 211–217. <https://doi.org/10.2147/JMDH.S104807>



People in some groups may be reluctant to self-report because they fear reprisal or negative consequences, especially those most likely to represent minority races and ethnic groups, such as migrant farmworkers or people with significant cultural barriers. Social pressures may also inhibit people from describing themselves as homeless, single parents, formerly incarcerated, or nearing exhaustion of TANF benefits.

Recommendations for State Agency Leaders: Reaching Special Population First Credential Attainment Goals

Recommendation A

Use the currently available data to measure the first credential attainment of Alabamians by demographic group.

Many of the *Success Plus* special populations facing barriers to credentialing and employment (e.g., single parents, displaced homemakers, and migrant farmworkers) are difficult to identify in the data. Credential attainment by these groups may be measurable in the future, but policymakers need to make informed decisions now. One solution is to utilize data currently collected by education and workforce agencies and alternative measures for hard to reach populations.

Data describing the gender, race, and ethnicity of Alabamians is the most widely available and should be used as a starting point to understand first credential attainment. Differences in credential attainment by gender, race, and ethnicity are possible to estimate for each region and can function as proxies to understand credentialing dynamics relevant to the identified special populations.

Measuring the first credential attainment of people who were formerly incarcerated is extremely difficult. It is more likely that federal and state authorities and training providers to the prison population are able to track the progress of individuals while they are incarcerated. 94% of Alabama inmates will return to civilian life, at which point they will be formerly incarcerated.

Recommendation B

Produce reports that invite innovation in credentialing efforts.

Current data collection and analysis can guide decision making and support programmatic changes that improve outcomes for special populations, who are often underserved and underrepresented in post-secondary education and workforce programs. A key first step is presenting available data to stakeholders and inviting new ideas and innovations to more accurately represent key populations.

Even within agencies, data can be difficult to share and analyze. ALSDE uses separate data systems to track CTE programs and student information reporting. Each data set is owned by different departments so extensive expertise and time are required to join and analyze the data.

Databases and software will need to be upgraded and processes streamlined to allow for regular reporting and expanded data collection efforts that encourage incremental progress and invite innovation. Seven state agencies can provide information on the demographic characteristics of program participants, but these reports take great effort to assemble as they require extracting data from aging data systems all while complying with strict privacy regulations. Regular reporting should be designed for the most effective use of time and resources to demonstrate progress.

The ACHE data system does not include need-based financial aid data. As a result, low-income students across the state are not represented in the data measuring first credential attainment.

State leaders have already demonstrated commitment to using improved data systems for informed decision-making. Although upgrading legacy systems is a large undertaking, investments that improve data collection and analysis can have long-lasting effects.

Recommendation C

Increase the capacity for analysis across state agencies.

¹⁸ Jacoby, T. (2021). *The Indispensable Institution: Taking the Measure of Community College Workforce Education*. Opportunity America. <https://opportunityamericaonline.org/ccsurvey/>

Agency leaders must equip their teams with the tools and expertise necessary for data-driven decision making. Part of this is equipping staff with time. These agencies contributed all attainment data they had available related to the demographic characteristics of students and participants. In some cases, great effort was exerted to assemble data from aging data systems and share it consistent with strict privacy regulations.

ACCS invests in training community college staff who collect and use data on non-credit training programs for program improvement. This investment is critical to improving outcomes at community colleges and to the state’s credential attainment goals. Community colleges have enormous potential to serve hard-to-reach student and working populations.¹⁸

Two additional low-cost, high-value actions for building capacity for data collection and analysis include:

- Partnering with university education, policy, economics, or related graduate programs to provide internships, practicums, or capstone projects to utilize students’ data analysis skills and introduce them to a future in public service.
- Utilizing the training and personalized technical assistance provided to states by federal statistical, education, and training agencies.

A broad range of data, data analysis tools, and related training data is available through DOL ETA, Department of Education, and DOL BLS. Federal agencies that have access to state and sub-state economic and educational data include U.S. Census Bureau and the USDA Economic Research Service. Both agencies have robust departments intended to support states to utilize the data that is generated by Alabamians and Alabama-based institutions. Contact information for a selection of these agencies are included in the Appendix.

Recommendation D

Prioritize data collection and analysis that answers key policy questions.

Collecting, maintaining, and sharing education and workforce data related to the first credential attainment of special populations will require modifications to existing systems. Effort to set up more effective systems and increase capacity will reduce the burden on agencies in the long run if agencies are coordinating to answer key policy questions.

The Workforce Development Division administers the seven regional workforce development boards. Five boards share program systems and infrastructure. Two others operate independently with their own governance and practices. The Department of Commerce can leverage this structure to compare and contrast participation, programming, and results for all 16 special populations. Findings may have widespread implications for other education and workforce development agencies.

Innovative partnerships between agencies and the private sector, such as between AOA and ACCS for work-based learning, may be necessary as new questions emerge, such as the return on investment for businesses participating in credentialing programs. Priority programs, partnerships, and data collection processes can be scaled up according to need and impact while other agencies, partners, and data providers work to advance reporting that is comprehensive and inclusive of special populations. With more information about individuals participating in credentialing programs statewide, return on investment could be estimated for Alabama's diverse economic regions and communities.

Recommendation E

Align and integrate data systems across education and workforce agencies.

Alabama is not unique in having separate data and reporting systems for its education and workforce agencies; this is a nationwide challenge. Effort to develop a robust longitudinal data system (P-20W) for use by all stakeholders to inform decision-making should continue.

Accounting for first-time credential attainment and progress toward the *Success Plus* Plan goals could be a key function of a P-20W systems. The Alabama Terminal on Linking and Analyzing Statistics (ATLAS) on Career Pathways and the Alabama College and Career Exploration Tool (ACCET) have the potential to integrate more information and account for the number of first-time credential earners across different systems and socioeconomic groups.

While ATLAS and ACCET are in progress, agencies can share aggregated data for comparison and in response to key policy questions. Adult Ed analyzes and shares data on its programs through a data dashboard. Similar data dashboards or an expanded Adult Ed dashboard could make more information available from agencies and collaborators to support decision-making.

Initial steps for agencies that expect to contribute and benefit from the P-20W, ATLAS, and ACCET initiatives include examining:

- definitions for credential attainment and special populations;
- methods for identifying first post-secondary credential attainment;
- data collection, analysis, and interpretation strategies;
- capacity building and professional development strategies; and
- partnerships that enhance regular reporting on credentialing in response to key policy questions.

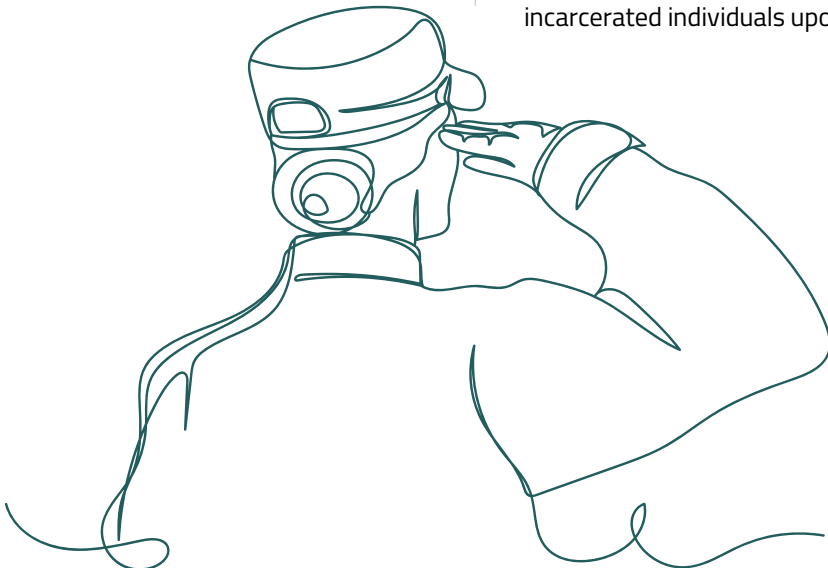
Recommendation F

Continue to increase access to postsecondary education, training, and credential pathways for Special Population groups.

The State of Alabama should continue investing in education and training programs focused not just on degree credentials but also non-degree credentials to meet its goal for all Special Populations. Given the tight labor market and persistent demand for skilled workers, identifying short-term training programs that can leverage WIOA and other training funds could increase the skills of Alabama's workforce and complement the pursuit of traditional two- and four-year degree programs by youth and adults alike.

Veterans are a Special Population that can be directly engaged. Currently, barriers to licensing limit license attainment by veterans who were trained and credentialed through their military experience. A reciprocity or data sharing agreement between the military and Alabama licensing boards could support the credential attainment of this special population.

Additionally, policymakers should consider novel approaches to reaching Special Population groups. For example, ISTC focuses on serving individuals who are incarcerated to help them earn a credential to be work-ready upon release. Continuing and new partnerships with AOA have the potential to further improve the educational and economic outlook of incarcerated individuals upon release.



Appendix



Appendix A:

Definitions of *Success Plus* Special Populations

POPULATION	DEFINITION ¹⁹
American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islander ²⁰	An individual who identifies with any of the original peoples of North and South America and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment is included in this demographic group.
Disabled Individual	An individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities.
Displaced Homemaker	<p>An individual who has been providing unpaid services to family members in the home, is unemployed or underemployed, is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment, and who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ has been dependent on the income of another family member but is no longer supported by that income, or ▪ is the dependent spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty and whose family income is significantly reduced because of a deployment, change of station, or service-connected death or disability of the member.
Formerly Incarcerated Individual	<p>An individual who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process, or ▪ requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record or arrest or conviction.
Homeless Individual	<p>An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence including a person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ shares housing of other persons due to hardship or loss of housing; ▪ lives in a motel, hotel, trailer park, campground due to lack of alternative adequate housing; ▪ lives in emergency or transitional shelter; ▪ is abandoned in a hospital; ▪ is awaiting foster care placement, or ▪ has a primary nighttime residence that is not designed as regular sleeping accommodations for people.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise stated, all definitions are adapted from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. H.R.803, Section 3(24). (2018). <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>

²⁰ Definition from the U.S. Census Bureau, found at <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>.

Long-Term Unemployed

An individual who has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks.

Low-Income

An individual who experiences any of the following:

- receives, or in the past six months has received SNAP, TANF, Social Security, or other state or local income-based public assistance;
 - receives, or is eligible to receive, free or reduced-price lunch;
 - whose own income or whose total family income does not exceed the higher of either:
 - poverty line or
 - 70% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL);
 - is experiencing homelessness;
 - is a foster child on behalf of whom state or local government payments are made.
-

Low Levels of Literacy/ English Language Learner/ Substantial Cultural Barriers

An individual who:

- is unable to read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job in the individual's family, or in society;
 - has limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending the English language and
 - o whose native language is not English, or
 - o who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language, or
 - perceives him or herself as possessing attitudes, beliefs, customs or practices that influence a way of thinking, acting, or working that may serve as a hindrance to employment.
-

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker

An individual who is employed in seasonal or temporary farmwork and their dependents. Migratory agricultural labor may require travel to a job site such that they are unable to return to a permanent place of residence within the same day.

Single Parent

A single, separated, divorced, or widowed individual who has primary responsibility for one or more dependent children under age 18 or a dependent with a disability. This includes women who are single and pregnant.

Veterans

An individual who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

TANF Recipients Nearing Exhaustion

An individual who is within two years of exhausting TANF benefits.

Unemployed/ Underemployed²¹

An individual who is unemployed is not employed, is available for work, and has made specific efforts to find employment.

An individual who is underemployed works less than 34 hours per week, but wants and is available for full-time work.

Youth Aged Out of the Foster System²²

An individual who is 18-21 years old and was in foster care before their 18th birthday.

Youth with Parents in Military Active Duty

An individual 21 years or younger with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and on active duty or in the National Guard or Reserve.

21 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021). *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#pter>

22 Alabama Department of Human Resources. *Independent Living Program*. <https://dhr.alabama.gov/foster-care/independent-living-program/>

Appendix B:

Alabama State Agencies Consulted

Contributing Agency

Alabama Office of Education and Workforce Statistics (OEWS)

Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)

Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)

Alabama Community College System (ACCS)

Alabama Community College System, Adult Education Programs (Adult Ed)

Alabama Community College System, Alabama Technology Network (ATN)

Alabama Community College System, Ingram State Technical College (ISTC)

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS)

Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs

Alabama Department of Commerce, Workforce Development Division

Alabama Department of Commerce, AIDT

Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA)

Alabama Department of Labor, Alabama Career Center System (ALCC)

Alabama Department of Labor, Labor Market Information (LMI) Division

U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS)

Appendix C: Demographic Data Available by Data Source

	Alabama Commission on Higher Education	Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services	Alabama Adult Education Services	Ingram State Technical College	Alabama State Department of Education	U.S. Office of Apprenticeship	U.S. Employment & Training Administration (DOL ETA)
Race and Ethnicity	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Disability Status		■		■	■		■
Displaced Homemaker Status				■			■
Incarceration Status				■			■
Homeless Status					■		■
Employment Status		■	■				■
Low Income Status		■		■			■
Literacy/Basic Skills Level				■			■
English Language Level			■		■		■
Significant Cultural Barriers Status			■				■
Migrant Farmworker					■		■
Age	■		■	■	■	■	■
Single Parent				■			■
Veteran	■	■		■		■	■
TANF Recipient		■					■
Youth Aging-out of Foster System							■
Dependent of Active-duty Military					■		■

Appendix D: Challenges of Data Collection for Select Populations

Population	Definition
<p>Disabled Individuals</p>	<p>The definition of a disability varies between agencies and individuals. For example, ALSDE must use federal guidelines to identify students with disabilities, while WIOA programs rely on self-reported disabilities. Post-secondary credential attainment is described for 1,393 individuals with disabilities, 2018–2021. In that same period, 7,733 CTE credentials were earned by high school students with learning or emotional disabilities. However, it is not possible with the current data to identify individual completers.</p> <p>The Alabama <i>Success Plus</i> goal for total attainment by people with disabilities, 2018–2025, is 18,568.</p>
<p>Displaced Homemakers</p>	<p>Counting the attainment of people who qualify as “displaced homemakers” is inherently difficult because this status can only be self-reported. A person who has stayed at home caring for children or older family members while depending on a spouse or partner for income may or may not consider themselves a homemaker. The transition from an unpaid caregiving role to paid employment may not align with the government’s understanding of “displacement.”</p> <p>Only WIOA and Ingram State Technical College were able to describe 40 people who identified as displaced homemakers and achieved a first credential from 2018–2021. The Alabama <i>Success Plus</i> goal for total first credential attainment by displaced homemakers, 2018–2025, is 13,977.</p>
<p>Formerly Incarcerated Individuals</p>	<p>Tracking the education attainment of people after incarceration is very difficult and not enough information exists to understand how they are accessing training or employment services. An alternative measure is the credential attainment of people while incarcerated.</p> <p>Approximately 94% of Alabama inmates will eventually reenter civilian life and join the workforce. As of September 2022, 26,290 people were incarcerated or detained in state or local facilities²³ and data from the Federal Bureau of Prisons shows that there are an additional 158,162 total federal inmates in the state.²⁴</p> <p>Attainment data is only available for 366 people currently incarcerated. The Alabama <i>Success Plus</i> goal for total first credential attainment among formerly incarcerated individuals, 2018–2025, is 80,836.</p>

23 Research and Planning Division. (2022). *Monthly Statistical Report for September 2022*. Alabama Department of Corrections.

24 Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2022, https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population_statistics.jsp (accessed September 03, 2022).

Homeless Individuals

No post-secondary attainment data is available for individuals experiencing homelessness, 2018-2021. ALSDE reported 1,532 CTE credentials completed during that period by students who had experienced homelessness at some point. It was not possible to limit this number to individuals earning their first credential.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment among individuals experiencing homelessness, 2018-2025, is 2,070.

Long-Term Unemployed

Attainment by people who had been unemployed for more than six months was described by the DOL ETA data only. Credential attainment information was available for 1,382 of these individuals.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for first credential attainment for long-term unemployed individuals, 2018-2025, is 14,364.

Low-Income

Nearly all agencies collect information about the income level of their participants. An exception is ACHE, the state's largest source of credential attainment. It does not collect data on federal- or state-funded need-based financial aid and leaves a large gap in data.

Post-secondary credential attainment data is available for 5,013 low-income individuals. The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment among low-income individuals, 2018-2025, is 121,165.

Low Levels of Literacy/ English Language Learners/Substantial Cultural Barriers

This special population includes three distinct categories, each with its own data-collection issues. For most of these agencies, academic assessments are required to identify and record a person's literacy level or English fluency. ALSDE is the greatest source of information for credential attainment by English Language Learners. From 2018–2021, 1,377 CTE credentials were earned by high school students who were English Language Learners. However, it is not possible with the current data to identify individual completers.

Adult Ed is the greatest source of credential attainment information for adults with low literacy and basic skills. The final category of people with substantial cultural barriers is more subjective and very little attainment is described for these individuals in any of the data sources. Post-secondary attainment data is available for 7,082 individuals in this category from 2018–2021.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment for people who have low literacy or basic skills level, are English Language Learners, or have substantial cultural barriers, 2018–2025, is 18,460.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

A challenge to learning about this population is that people in this category may be reluctant to self-report to government agencies. This is related to uncertainty in immigration policies and increased racial tension in the last few years.

Every five years the U.S. Department of Agriculture conducts an agricultural census that estimates the size of the migrant and seasonal farm workforce. The 2022 census is in progress and will be released by 2024.

No post-secondary attainment data is for migrant or seasonal farmworkers, 2018–2021. The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment by migrant and seasonal farmworkers, 2018–2025, is 4,380.

Older Individuals (Ages 55–64)

Most credentials earned by people in this population cannot be verified as first attainments. These students are more likely to have attained a credential out of state or before the date range used in this study.

Attainment data is available for 1,675 older individuals from 2018–2021. The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment by older individuals, 2018–2025, is 16,346.

Single Parents

Only ISTC and the DOL ETA data described whether their participants were single parents or not. Since all ISTC students were incarcerated at the time of credential attainment, none had custody of their children at the time of credential completion.

In the workforce development program, 1,150 single parents earned credentials.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment by single parents, 2018–2025, is 109,956.

Veterans

Veterans were counted in the ACHE data for degree and certificate attainment if they accessed any veterans' programs. Veterans who did not access those programs were not counted. Additionally, many of these attainments cannot be verified as first credentials. Many other agencies attempted to collect this data, yet little or no attainment was reported.

Attainment data is available for 9,746 veterans from 2018–2021. The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for credential attainment for veterans earning their first credential, 2018–2025 is 57,244.

TANF Recipients Nearing Exhaustion

Very little attainment data is available for this population. From 2018-2021, only the DOL ETA data described 81 people nearing exhaustion of TANF benefits.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for first credential attainment for TANF Recipients nearing exhaustion, 2018-2025, is 1,165.

Unemployed or Underemployed

The DOL ETA data describes participants based on their income every three months. For the purposes of this report, we assume that a person who had no earnings in the previous quarter is unemployed (4,015). This includes individuals in the long-term unemployed population. It does not include people who have been unemployed for less than three months, or those who are underemployed. ADRS data described 716 unemployed individuals who attained credentials.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for first credential attainment for people who were unemployed or underemployed, 2018-2025, is 29,310.

Youth Aged-out of the Foster System

Very little attainment data is available for this population. From 2018-2021, only eleven people described as aging-out of the foster system attained their first credential.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for first credential attainment for youth aged out of the foster system, 2018-2025, is 168.

Youth with parents in Active-duty Military

No post-secondary attainment data is available for this population. ALSDE reported 1,815 CTE credentials completed during that period by students with parents in the active-duty military. It was not possible to limit this number to individuals earning their first credential.

The Alabama *Success Plus* goal for total first credential attainment among individuals experiencing homelessness, 2018-2025, is 8,944.

Appendix E: *Success Plus* Credential Attainment Goals for Each Special Population

Special Populations	2018-2025 Attainment Goal	2021-2022 Annual Attainment Goal
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiians	3,047	762
Displaced Homemaker	13,977	3,494
Formerly Incarcerated	80,836	20,209
Homeless Individuals	2,070	518
Individuals Nearing TANF Exhaustion	1,165	291
Long-Term Unemployed	14,364	3,591
Low-Income	121,165	30,291
Low Levels of Literacy/English Language Learners/ Substantial Cultural Barriers	18,460	4,615
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers	4,380	1,095
Older Individuals	16,346	4,087
People with Disabilities	18,568	4,642
Single Parents	109,956	27,489
Unemployed or Underemployed	29,310	7,328
Veterans	57,244	14,311
Youth Aged Out of Foster System	168	42
Youth with Parents in Active-duty Military	8,944	2,236

Appendix F: Contacts for Training and Technical Assistance by Federal Agencies

FEDERAL STATISTICAL AGENCY	Training Provider or Platform	Training Contacts
U.S. Census Bureau	Data Dissemination Office	census.askdata@census.gov 844-ASK-DATA www.census.gov/data/academy/request.html
U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)	Division of Information and Marketing Services	blsdata_staff@bls.gov 800-877-8339 www.bls.gov/opub/opbinfo.htm
U.S. Department of Education (Ed), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	Distance Learning Dataset Training	nces.ed.gov/training/datauser/#/
U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA)	Workforce GPS	support@workforcegps.org www.workforcegps.org
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Economic Research Service (ERS)	Rural Economy & Population Subject Area Specialists	www.ers.usda.gov/subject-specialists

Appendix G:

Definitions of Each Type of Credential Counted

Source: Credential Engine. (2022). *Counting U.S. Post-secondary and Secondary Credentials*. Washington D.C.: Credential Engine.

Degree

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of study. Primary degree levels include Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, and specific professional degrees.

Certificate

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution indicating the satisfactory completion of a non-degree program of study. Most certificates require no more than one year of full-time academic effort. Many certificates are occupational in nature. Some are described as certificates of completion.

Certification

An award by an authoritative body—such as an industry or professional association—to an individual who demonstrates designated knowledge, skills, and abilities in a particular occupation. Certifications are time-limited and renewable. An individual may take courses to prepare for a competency examination. Certification providers may allow other organizations to provide the courses and administer the tests that qualify a person for the certification. Verification that certification providers and their partners meet certain standards is provided by accreditation organizations.

License

Each state requires persons practicing specific professions and vocations to first obtain an occupational license from a state licensing board. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "When implemented properly, occupational licensing can help protect the health and safety of consumers by requiring practitioners to undergo a designated amount of training and education in their field."

Apprenticeship

A program that establishes practitioners as qualified technicians in their chosen trade or profession through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction. It is operationalized by a formal training contract between an employer and their employee and completion is recognized by a certificate of completion.

Appendix H: Examining Secondary CTE Credential Completions by Race

In 2021, more than 320,000 Alabamians ages 15 to 19 — ten percent of the working age population (15–64) — were making decisions about school and work that will shape their contribution to Alabama’s economy in the proceeding years. Most 15 to 19 year olds are enrolled in secondary school where an important path to industry-recognized credentials is through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Of the 376 public high schools in Alabama, 72 of them offer CTE programs. More than half of all public high school students in Alabama enroll in at least one CTE course.²⁵ And from 2018–2021, there were approximately 90,000 certificates, certifications, and licenses earned through CTE programs.

These CTE credentials are only reported when students exit the ALSDE system, when they are assumed to either continue post-secondary education or enter the labor force. Because a single high school student can earn multiple credentials, it’s difficult to identify first or most important credentials.

Aggregated data describing enrollments and CTE completions are made public via non-profit associations and research organizations. Two organizations with data dashboards relevant to CTE program data include Advance CTE²⁶ and the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA).²⁷ More detailed data is available from ALSDE describing the individual students who enroll in CTE programs and other College and Career Readiness (CCR) programs.

To identify opportunities to expand CTE access and credential attainment trends, an analysis of credentials earned by demographic group can be helpful. The percent of CTE credentials attained by demographic group can be compared to statewide demographics for Alabamians ages 15 to 19, as shown in Table 7. The credential attainment results are similar to those reported in the above section “Credential Attainment by Demographic Group,” but are even more aligned with broader population dynamics. As demonstrated in Table 5 “Credential Attainment by Demographic Group,” it’s important to be able to examine these results by type of credential to see if there are differences in credential attainment by type. It might also be important to consider other contextual factors.

TABLE 7: CTE Credentials Attained 2018–2021 By Demographic Group

Demographic Group	% of CTE Credentials Attained	% of Alabama Population, Ages 15-19 ²⁸
White	64%	65%
Black or African American	29%	30%
American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	3%	3%
Multiracial	2%	2%
Asian	1%	1%

Additional context for participation in CTE programs would include CTE program enrollment. For example, while 64 percent of the state’s population identifies as White, only 55 percent of students enrolled in CTE programs are identified as White.²⁹ Despite the lower enrollment rates, White students earn CTE credentials at a higher rate, around 65 percent. **This suggests that White students are more likely to earn multiple CTE credentials than their peers.** They might enroll in CTE programs at lower rates, but credential attainment is comparable to other demographic groups that might have higher rates of enrollment. The attainment numbers in Table 7 obscure these important dynamics.

Further analysis of the circumstances that impact CTE enrollment and attainment by different demographic groups in CTE programs and other CR programs is warranted.

25 Alabama Department of Commerce, Workforce Development Division (2019). *2020 Combined WIOA Plan*. State of Alabama. (82)

26 Advance CTE. <https://careertech.org/>

27 Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. <https://parcalabama.org/>

28 Source: Population Estimate Program. (2022). *Annual County Resident Population Estimates by Characteristics*. U.S. Census Bureau.

29 Advance CTE (2020). *Alabama Secondary CTE Enrollment*. <https://careertech.org/alabama>

