



Minnesota Office of Higher Education Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027

Introduction

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency dedicated to helping every Minnesotan who seeks a postsecondary education meet their goal through a variety of tools, services, and initiatives centered around four broad themes:

Affordability

Robust state financial aid programs that support Minnesotans with the most financial need. Students can graduate without student loan debt levels that limit their financial futures.

- Need-Based Financial Aid
 - Helps lower- and middle-income students and families pay for educational expenses at eligible Minnesota colleges or universities
 - Minnesota State Grant
 - Postsecondary Child Care Grant
 - Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program
 - Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant
 - Minnesota Work Study
 - Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students
- SELF Loan Program
 - Long-term, low-interest student loans to help families cover the cost of college
- Minnesota College Savings Plan - MN Saves
 - Helps families save for college through a 529 plan that offers tax-saving benefits

Attainment

Students are given the supports and services they need to finish what they start.

- Minnesota's Attainment Goal: Increase the percentage of Minnesotans ages 25 to 44 who have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree to 70% by 2025
- Minnesota's FAFSA Goal: Increase FAFSA filing by 5 percentage points every year for 5 years, with a focus on closing gaps in FAFSA filing for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color. Therefore, for the class of 2022, our state's goal is to see FAFSA filing increase to 53%, while closing gaps in FAFSA filing by race/ethnicity.

Accessibility

A diverse array of higher education and postsecondary training programs exist so that all Minnesotans have choices for their future. Minnesotans have the information they need to understand the value of higher education and how to find the right option for themselves and their families.

- Student and Parent Outreach
 - Minnesota Goes to College
 - FAFSA Completion Initiatives
 - Direct Admissions
 - Other early college awareness programs and initiatives
- Postsecondary Participation Programs
 - Targeted programs that help students prepare for college and transition successfully into higher education
 - Get Ready –a federal Gear Up grant
 - Intervention for College Attendance Grant Program
 - Summer Academic Enrichment Program
- Adult and Worker Engagement
 - Programs targeted at removing barriers and facilitating entry into and completion of postsecondary education in specifically targeted industries
 - Dual Training Grant/PIPELINE Program
 - Minnesota Next Generation Certified Nursing Assistant Initiative
 - Minnesota Student Teacher Grants
 - Student Loan Repayment Programs for specific occupations critical for the state's economy
 - Programs to support incarcerated individuals
 - Parenting Student Support Programs
- Research
 - Produces information and analysis on Minnesota postsecondary education, student success, and effectiveness of state- and federally-funded programs
 - Bridges existing cross-agency data to gauge the effectiveness of current programs and design targeted improvement strategies to help students through Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLS)

Accountability

Students are given the supports and services they need to finish what they start. Higher education institutions provide high-quality options and are committed to student success. Data is collected and transparently shared to ensure that all higher education stakeholders are clear on the successes and challenges of higher education in Minnesota.

- Licensing and Registration
 - Currently developing a quality credentials framework, in partnership with OHE Research, for identifying Minnesota credentials, programs, and providers that offer evidence of value to individuals and support smart investments by the state
 - Provides consumer protections for students and families
 - Registers degree-granting private institutions
 - Licenses occupational programs
 - Helps resolve student complaints
- Research related to student safety, including annual Sexual Assault Data and Study Abroad Health and Safety report

Who We Serve

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) connects students and families with financial aid programs, information, and resources to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency collaborates with public, private, and tribal colleges and universities to enhance the distribution and effectiveness of need-based aid and competitive grant programs and provides the public with access to cutting-edge agency research products to support innovation and success.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by OHE, awarding more than \$210 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing, and an early college awareness program and initiatives for youth.

Inter-agency work with the Minnesota Department of Education helps E-12 students successfully transition to postsecondary education. Collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Department of Labor and Industry supports state businesses and industry by aligning efforts to build and retain a well-trained and educated workforce and create opportunities for job seekers.

One Minnesota Plan

Building Blocks

Mission

Improve the lives of all Minnesotans by working collaboratively to implement policies that achieve results.

Vision

Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in – those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, and zip codes.

Guiding Principles

- Practice servant leadership
- Treat everyone with respect and dignity
- Do the right thing, especially when it is difficult
- Ask how your actions are reinforcing or removing structural inequity
- Promote the common good over narrow special interests
- Be accessible, transparent, and accountable
- Include voices from communities who will be most impacted
- Bring people together across lines of difference

Priority Areas

- Equity and Inclusion
- Minnesota's Environment
- Fiscal Accountability, Customer Experience, and Measurable Results
- Children and Families
- Thriving Communities, Housing, and Workforce
- Healthy Minnesotans

One Minnesota Priorities

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education's work aligns directly and indirectly with the One Minnesota Plan. Below are the strategic ways the agency helps achieve the One Minnesota Priorities.

Equity and Inclusion

Strategies *The work we'll undertake to advance the priority area*

Strategy 1: Evaluate and enhance culture around recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies to achieve Enterprise-wide goal to retain 75% of OHE's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); individuals with disabilities; and veteran employees by 2024.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
Demonstrate OHE's ongoing commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and anti-racist learning and working environment for all
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Create a new employee mentoring program for targeted groups
 - Incorporate equity, inclusion, accessibility, and cultural competence into each stage of the selection process
 - Ensure all job postings contain inclusive language, reflect the State's values on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and eliminate barriers to employment
 - Require an equity/cultural competency in minimum qualifications for all state job postings
 - Hire dedicated employee(s) to focus on the agency's DEI efforts
 - Utilizing the State's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to facilitate space for uncomfortable conversations around current events and experiences
 - Secure funding to support and provide anti-racism training for senior leadership, supervisors, and managers
 - Ensure employees understand and can clearly communicate why it is important to end systemic racism and how their individual work contributes to ending it at OHE
 - Update position descriptions to embed agency cultural competence commitments and set expectations tied to the performance of job duties
 - Ensure all senior leaders, supervisors, managers, and other staff whose work is likely to include matters that have Tribal implications have completed the Tribal-State Relations Training

Strategy 2: Implement HR systems, processes, and procedures that promote equity work to eliminate disparities.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
 - Promote a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplace that values and uplifts racial minorities, veterans, and employees with (dis)abilities

- Provide education, training/on-demand training, and access to managers and supervisors around policy and procedural inclusiveness in the areas of the hiring process, onboarding, and retention
- Revitalize the Equity Committee and review the charter by summer 2023
- Enlist the Equity Committee to collaborate with HR to review and identify barriers that maintain inequities in our human resources policies and hiring practices. This will be done by reviewing the agency's policies, procedures, and practices, and providing recommendations to senior leadership
- Continue to share pertinent information with all staff via the OHE Insider newsletter.
- Require that all job postings contain inclusion, accessibility, and cultural competence, reflecting the State's values on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce while eliminating barriers with the hiring process

Strategy 3: Emphasize a continuous learning process, with an emphasis on cultural competency, focused on developing knowledge, appreciation, acceptance, and skills within the context of different cultural approaches. Cultural competence is also increased via enterprise and agency policies, attitudes, and practices.

- **What do we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
 - Gain commitment from OHE leadership to become anti-racist
 - Full investment in leadership and staff training and development to ensure alignment with ongoing DEI efforts
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Provide cultural competency training to OHE leadership and staff
 - Develop inclusive leadership practices throughout the agency
 - Ensure managers are including cultural competency interview questions in the hiring process
 - Ensure that diverse perspectives are included in the development of human resources policies, procedures, practices, and communication to foster inclusive practices across the enterprise
 - Promote Employee Resource Group meetings and attendance

Strategy 4: Secure funding and hire DEI Director

- **What do we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
 - Strive for OHE workforce to have full representation of targeted populations listed above by meeting agency's Affirmative Action goals
 - Increase DEI training, equitable practices and policies at OHE
 - Hold the agency's leadership and staff accountable for reaching the One Minnesota and the agency's strategic plan priorities and goals
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Revitalize the Equity Committee and review the charter by Summer 2023.
 - Review agency policies and procedures and make recommendations to agency senior leadership on 1) organizational policies, 2) workplace culture and climate

- Develop inclusive leadership practices

Metrics and Milestones *How we will track our progress in this priority area*

- **Related to Strategy 1:**

- Retain 75% of all new hires for two years (8 quarters) in each of our state's targeted groups (racial minorities, veterans, employees with disabilities)
- Complete successful onboarding process of DEI dedicated employee by December 2023
- Develop the agency's equity plan by December 2023
- Participate in Monitoring the Hiring Process Quarterly and submit a report to State's HR office, Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB)
- Include language in the agency's equity training plan requiring senior leadership, supervisors, and managers to receive anti-racism training when they begin their appointment at the agency by July 2023
- Annually track anti-racism training in State's ELM System
- Semi-annually host "safe space sessions" with EAP for all staff
- Semi-annually share reporting metrics with OHE staff via OHE Insider Newsletter and at All Staff meetings
- Annually review State's Employee Engagement Survey results with senior leadership, managers and supervisors and develop goals to improve result
- Update OHE position descriptions language to include OHE commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and cultural competence by May 2023
- Ensure required staff have completed the Tribal-State Relations training by December 2023

- **Related to Strategy 2:**

- Recruit one staff from every division to be a member of the Equity Committee by September 2023
- Request review and feedback from managers and supervisors on policy and procedural changes December 2023
- Share semi-annual reporting metrics with all OHE staff via the OHE Newsletter
- Share progress and/or solutions toward barriers identified by the Equity Committee semi-annually
- Where inequities have been identified, work with MMB to identify and implement best practices for improvement semi-annually

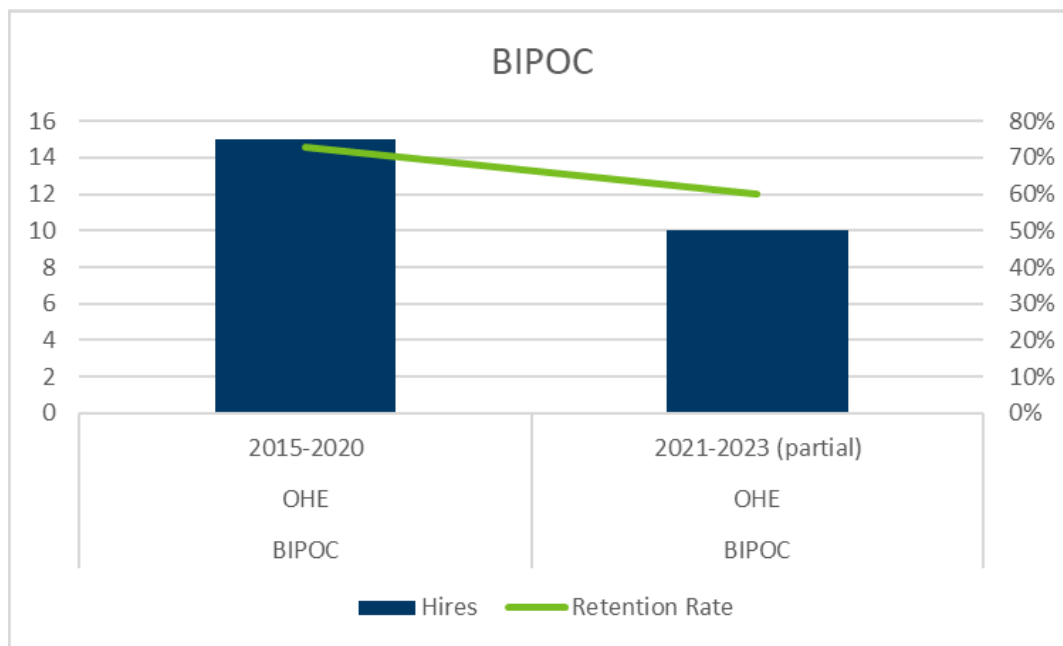
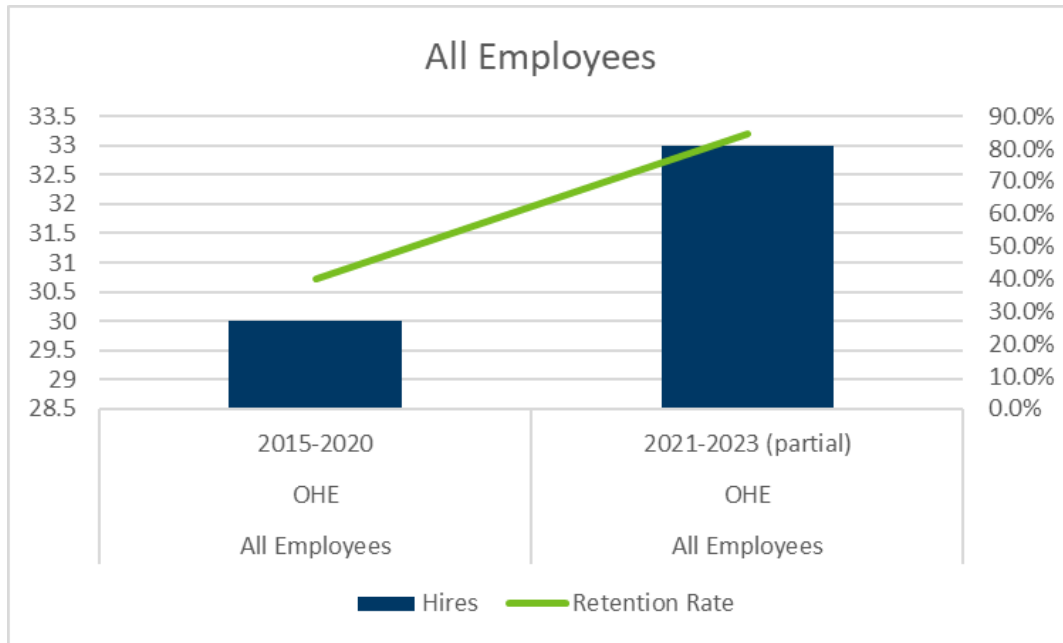
- **Related to Strategy 3:**

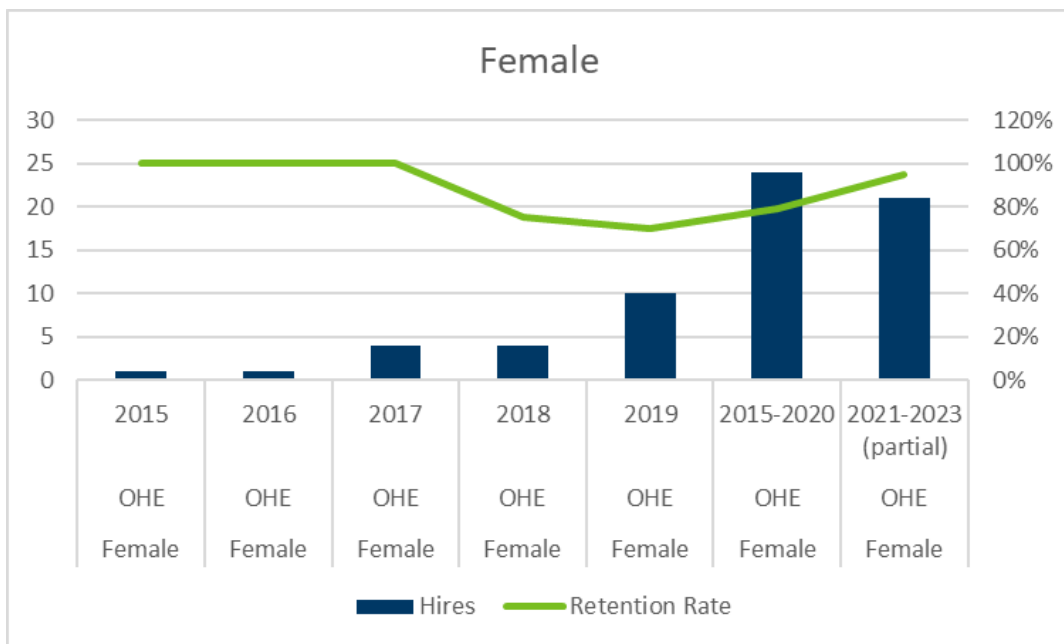
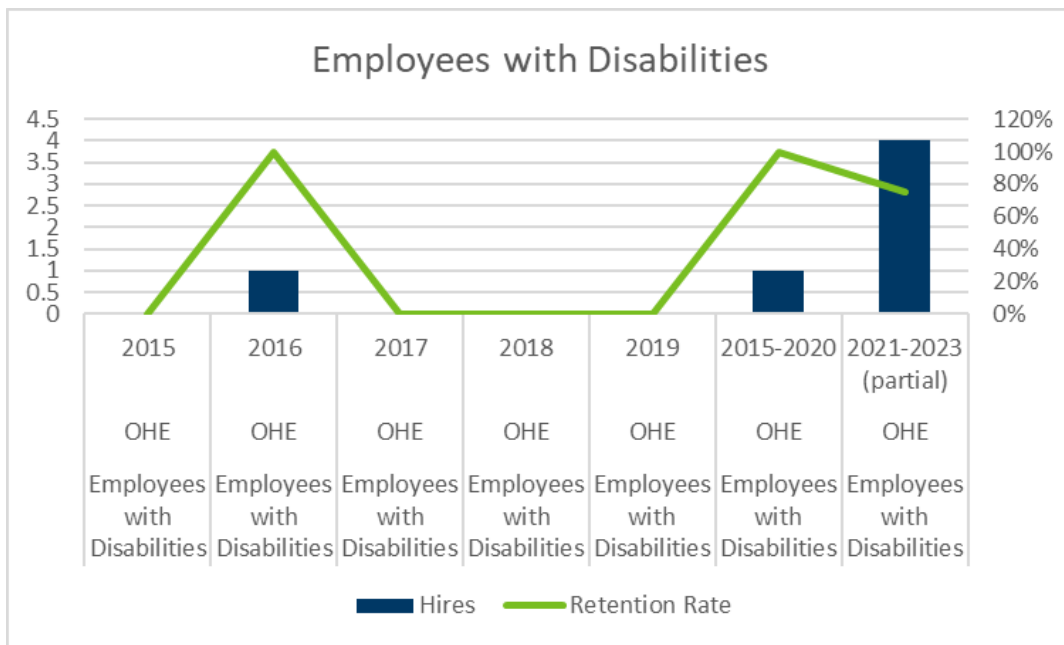
- Annually track cultural competency training in State's ELM System
- Annually track anti-racism training in State's ELM System
- Semi-annually share reporting metrics with all OHE staff
- Work with MMB to identify staff Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) outcomes and provide training opportunities to increase cultural development annually

- **Related to Strategy 4:**

- Publish approved policies on the OHE Exchange Intranet page
- Report training developed and completed utilizing State's ELM System

- Work with MMB to identify disparities and opportunities available to reduce disparities annually





Source: Minnesota Management & Budget, Enterprise Employee Resources

Equitable Procurement

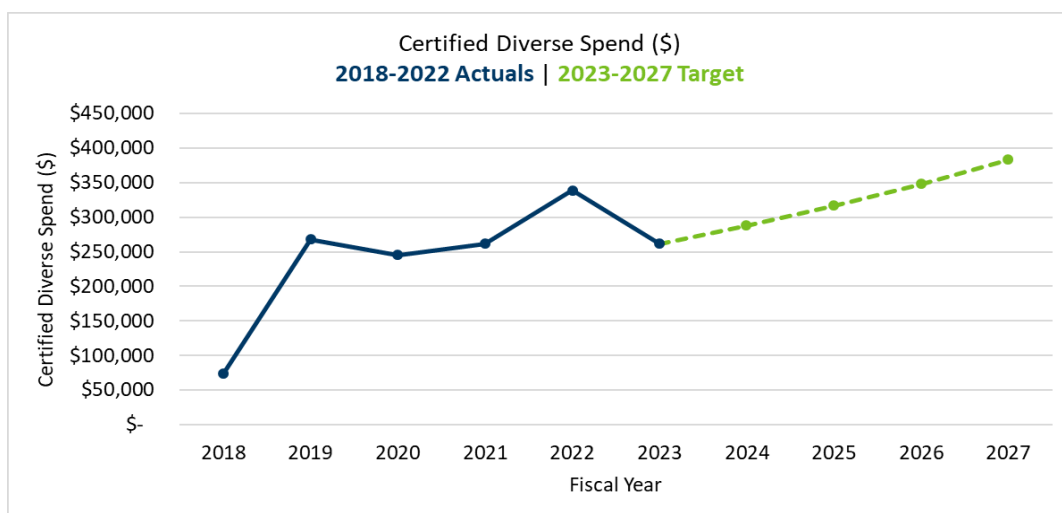
Strategies *The work we'll undertake to advance the priority area*

Strategy 1: Continuously review procurement process to advance goal of ensuring all adjusted total spending for certified businesses has an average growth of 10% each year for 2023-2027.

- **What do we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
Grant-making and procurement within state government are critical tools in ensuring the equitable delivery of government services and economic development. Government grants and contracting play a key role in determining what kinds of organizations receive funding and which businesses grow within our state. To support the administration's work toward achieving the One Minnesota goals, state agencies must ensure that all Minnesotans are equitably able to participate in OHE's/State's procurement process procurement and grant-making policies and practices.
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Review and update the agency's procurement practices
 - Prioritize the use of OHE's Equity Select authority to directly select certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned (TG/ED/VO) small businesses by communicating agency goals and providing procurement training for all staff
 - Actively seek engagement with diverse vendors for each area of need
 - Work with the Department of Administration to develop a toolbox to facilitate eligible targeted vendors to enroll in the targeted vendor program

Metrics and Milestones *How we will track our progress in this priority area*

- Enterprise Goal: Increase total certified businesses spend growth to \$382,648 by 2027.
- Internal Goal: Increase certified businesses spend growth that the agency has direct control over by 10% each year for 2023-2027.
- Internal Goal: Increase the use of Equity Select contracts by 10% for FY24 and FY25.



Source: Department of Administration, Office of Equity in Procurement

Minnesota's Environment

Strategies *The work we'll undertake to advance the priority area*

Strategy 1: Prepare and Train Minnesotans for the Growing Clean Economy.

This strategy aims to leverage the state's existing workforce training and education infrastructure, through programs across multiple agencies and systems. It is hoped that this will prepare and train workers in these existing and new industries related to Minnesota's climate and environment.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
Minnesota has a robust educational and workforce training infrastructure but can often seem overwhelming and disconnected to prospective students and workers seeking opportunities to enter the new and emerging field of climate and sustainability-related careers.
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Partner with state agencies (Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Department of Labor and Industry, Department of Economic and Employment Development and Minnesota, Department of Agriculture) to create awareness about existing and emerging sustainable energy careers, degrees, and certification programs, and disseminate relevant information through a robust communications campaign
 - Use state financial aid and dual training resources to support CAF priority actions around removing barriers to employment and training opportunities for women, people of color, and individuals with disabilities.
 - Convene a group of stakeholders in the energy/environment space for a conversation around how we can partner and ways to support educational opportunities in clean energy and the environment.
 - Increase partnerships between businesses, education institutions, community-based organizations, local chambers or industry associations, and other workforce partners to provide for greater collaboration and impact. This will include increased access to relevant training for career seekers across Greater Minnesota.
 - Utilize the existing Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership to better leverage and align the education and training infrastructure specific to careers related to sustainability and the environment that exists across the Minnesota Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Economic and Employment Development, Department of Labor and Industry, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Metrics and Milestones *How we will track our progress in this priority area:*

- In 2023, create an inter-agency workgroup to develop a communication campaign on existing and emerging sustainable energy careers, degrees, and certification programs
- In 2023, include topic on careers related to sustainability on Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership meeting agenda
- In 2024, meet quarterly with businesses, education institutions, community-based organizations, and local chambers to strengthen partnerships and share ideas on education and training on careers related to sustainability

Fiscal Accountability, Customer Experience, and Measurable Results

Strategies *The work we'll undertake to advance the priority area*

Strategy 1: Increase the number of financial programs administered through OHE's new MNAid financial aid system.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
OHE's strategic investment in MNAid – OHE's modern financial aid administration platform – continues to result in increased efficiencies and a better user experience for OHE, our campus partners, and students. For example, the platform allows OHE to get financial aid to students quicker by more effectively redistributing program funds; this allows campuses to see and request funds across most of the aid programs OHE administers in one portal. This results in an increased administrative capacity at campuses that can be used to focus on student engagement. As programs that include a student application are moved into MNAid, we also improve the student experience by allowing direct access to their state financial aid award history and their application status. The ability to securely upload and submit verification materials is also increased.
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Develop an implementation plan that moves most of OHE's remaining financial aid programs into MNAid by FY2026:
 - FY24 – Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program, Student Teacher Grants in Shortage Areas, Underrepresented Student Teacher Grants, and Postsecondary Child Care Grant
 - FY25 – Dual Training Grant, Summer Academic Enrichment Programs, and Minnesota Work Study
 - FY26 – Tuition Reciprocity, Teacher Shortage Loan Repayment, Agricultural Education Loan Forgiveness, Aviation Degree Loan Forgiveness, and Rural Veterinarian Loan Forgiveness
 - Continue to invest in financial aid staffing and resources to provide training to our campus partners and students utilizing the MNAid platform and assisting with the technology conversion.

Strategy 2: Foster greater interagency collaboration to impact Minnesota's generational problems by expanding inter-agency use of Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) and Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLS) data. This will help ensure all decisions are data-driven for policy development and future proposals.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**
Minnesota has created a data asset in SLEDs and ECLS that is rich in both breadth and depth. This is a result of the well-developed partnerships between all of the agencies that contribute to and/or use the data. These partnerships are expanding to include additional state and county agencies. Researchers are using this data to create possible solutions to existing problems, as well as to evaluate the impact of current programs.

The new Comprehensive Services Map on ECLDS provides the geolocation and basic information of community services and resources available to Minnesota families, such as low-cost health providers, early care schools, local agencies, classes and libraries, among others. The tool, launched in November 2019, was developed in partnership with the Minnesota Literacy Council and uses the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota's Bridge to Benefits project as inspiration.

- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Fully fund all agency coordinators and network training staff (we have included the DEED coordinator in our 24-25 budget for the first time). This is one response to the main barrier to the use of the data which is capacity
 - Review the visual displays of data to ensure that information is accessible and easily understood by a general audience
 - Identify and remove barriers limiting agencies' use of SLEDs and ECLDS data to accomplish agency goals, and develop an action plan to remove barriers to user participation

Strategy 3: Modernize licensing and registration application and approval process.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**

The Office of Higher Education provides consumer protection for students and prospective students. Two state laws require private and out-of-state public postsecondary educational institutions to meet state standards to operate legally in Minnesota. This process requires educational institutions to submit materials to OHE to approve curriculum, monitor financial viability, and monitor advertising and recruitment practices. This process can be improved through the implementation of a web-based and role-based workflow management solution to replace the current system used by postsecondary institutions for submitting registration applications which will also allow for enhanced reporting and improved dashboards for tracking application status.
- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**
 - Complete Phase 1 enhancements to the new system and initiate work on Phase 2 to create a fully functional workflow management solution.

Metrics and Milestones *How we will track our progress in this priority area:*

- By July 2023, complete Phase 1 enhancements.
- By December 2023, complete Phase 2 of the project.

Children and Families

Strategies *The work we'll undertake to advance the priority area*

Strategy 1: Increase retention and completion rates for college students with dependent children through targeted investments in direct campus services.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**

Students who are parents face multiple barriers to completing their postsecondary education. Increasing the number of parenting students who have earned a postsecondary credential is an important part of a two-generation approach to ending poverty and improving the economic and workforce opportunities for these students.

- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**

- Conduct research to determine baseline data on retention and completion rates by sector for this population of students to determine realistic goals for increasing success.
- Coordinate a competitive grant program to fund campus programs designed to increase enrollment, persistence, and completion of parenting students
- Leverage resources of the Children's Cabinet and collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Health to embed health and child wellness services within campus-based programs
 - Conduct on-going assessment of use and outcomes for embedded services to determine future needs and opportunities to scale to support more students.
- Engage in ongoing research to better understand the needs, demographics, and outcomes of this population of students

Strategy 2: Invest in Programs and Develop Policies Focused on Ensuring a Postsecondary Credential Remains Affordable for All Students and Families.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**

Individuals with a postsecondary credential have increased earning potential over their lifetime. They are also shown to be more civically engaged and contribute positively to the economic vitality of the state. The costs of earning a credential can be a barrier for many families and state financial aid programs are an essential tool for making college possible for students with low and middle incomes.

- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**

- Through state investments, increase financial aid to better support students and families with lower- and middle-incomes
- Expand access to the Postsecondary Child Care Grant program by simplifying the program's award formula. This involves leveraging information from the FAFSA to better target program information to student parents, strategic partnerships with student-parent supporting organizations, and reducing the administrative paperwork burdens on students and colleges
- Support the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State system investments to ensure increased student success and limit the need for tuition and fee increases
- Increase the percentage of students completing the FAFSA or state financial aid application

Strategy 3: Identify opportunities to Increase college planning and exploration behavior for K-12 students and families.

- **What we want to accomplish with this strategy:**

Increase college planning and career exploration for all Minnesota K-12 students to better prepare high school graduates to enroll in Minnesota colleges and universities and to succeed in higher education.

- **What activities we'll undertake to support this strategy:**

- Scale the Direct Admissions program to additional high schools each year until full participation is realized
- To increase college access and enrollment, reapply for federal Gear Up grant funding in 2024 to continue and expand offerings for school and community-based programming
- Support efforts to increase equitable access to PSEO and concurrent enrollment programs
- Communications will hire a vendor in fall 2023 to develop a strategic plan for public engagement/outreach efforts. The plan will include a focus on promoting college exploration, MN Goes to College, FAFSA completion, and applications to Minnesota financial aid programs
- Communications will work with a vendor in fall 2023 to survey college students and key stakeholders to assess where there is a gap in information on programs and how to best communicate OHE programs.
- Starting in Summer 2023, communications will begin planning and development of a new OHE website that is customer centered. The website will launch in 2025. We will engage in user testing and other industry standards practices to ensure content is easy to navigate.

Metrics and Milestones *How we will track our progress in this priority area:*

- Collaborate with participating colleges and universities to identify achievable increases in retention and completion for college students with dependent children through targeted investments in direct campus services
 - Development and awarding of grants to colleges and universities, beginning in fiscal year 2024
 - Data collection from campuses to track student retention and completion for those using funded services
- Ensure a postsecondary credential remains affordable for all students and their families.
 - Increase FAFSA filing by 5 percentage points every year for 5 years, with a focus on closing gaps in FAFSA filing for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color
 - Changes to the State Grant funding formula to increase the number of recipients by at least 200 students per academic year.
- Increase college planning and exploration behavior for K-12 students and families.
 - Increased number of high schools participating in Direct Admissions by 25-50 schools annually
 - Increased number of students served through Get Ready program by 3% per academic year.
 - Increased number of students receiving Summer Academic Enrichment Program stipends
 - Increased usage of OHE college exploration tools, including My Higher Ed website by 10% through dynamic content and paid digital marketing.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Strategic Plan

Mission

To ensure equitable attainment of higher education for all Minnesotans.

Vision

The financial security of Minnesota's citizens and communities determines the economic vitality of our state. Attainment of a high-quality higher education credential or postsecondary training continues to serve as the primary pathway to the middle class and financial security for individuals and their families, and all Minnesotans deserve equitable and just access. Without equitable and just access, many of our families and communities remain financially insecure, and the state lacks the educated workforce needed to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Ensuring equitable and just access requires the state to provide sustained, substantial investments to postsecondary education – providing individuals the opportunity to pursue their postsecondary goals. In addition to increasing the economic vitality of our citizens and state, these investments will result in a more educated citizenry that contributes to their communities and participates in our democracy – strengthening our state.

OHE's work moves Minnesota to a future where higher education is:

- **Accessibility:** A diverse array of higher education and postsecondary training programs exist so that all Minnesotans have choices for their future. Minnesotans have the information they need to understand the value of higher education and how to find the right option for themselves and their families. Historically excluded populations are welcomed and supported.
- **Affordability:** Robust state financial aid programs support the Minnesotans with the most financial need. Students are able to graduate without student loan debt levels that limit their financial futures.
- **Attainment:** Students are given the supports and services they need to finish what they start.
- **Accountability:** Higher education institutions provide high-quality options and are committed to student success. Data is collected and transparently shared to ensure that all higher education stakeholders are clear on the successes and challenges of higher education in Minnesota.

OHE's Guiding Principles

- Practice servant leadership
- Treat everyone with respect and dignity

- Do the right thing, especially when it is difficult
- Ask how your actions are reinforcing or removing structural inequity
- Promote the common good over narrow special interests
- Be accessible, transparent, and accountable
- Include voices from communities who will be most impacted
- Bring people together across line of difference

In the spirit of the overall One Minnesota Guiding Principles, OHE's work is informed by these additional values:

- We respect, value and celebrate the unique attributes and characteristics of Minnesota's postsecondary students.
- We are committed to providing great service to improve the lives of the people we serve.
- We strive toward equity at work and encourage our employees to give their best and to speak out, even when it is difficult.
- We work to listen to and empower the communities we serve who are the most in need and will be most impacted by the services we provide.
- We seek out and promote diverse alliances because we value each other's knowledge, opinions and abilities and know that together we can meet the challenges we face.

As indicated earlier, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education is dedicated to helping every Minnesotan who seeks a postsecondary education meet their goal through a variety of tools, services, and initiatives centered around four broad themes. To that end, the following strategic plan is centered around those themes:

Attainment: Ensure All Minnesotans Achieve Their Postsecondary Goals

Context:

As an agency, we know that greater educational attainment correlates with increased earnings, lower unemployment, better health, and other social and economic benefits. Minnesota's ability to support equitable outcomes for all residents starts with all families having access to employment at a family-sustaining wage to sufficiently cover the costs of housing, food, transportation, and childcare, and increase their quality of life.

The work at OHE is driven by Minnesota's attainment goal for 70% of Minnesota adults (ages 25 to 44) to have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025. This goal, which was set by the Minnesota Legislature in 2015 (Minn. Laws 2015 Chapter 69 Article 3 Sec. 6), also sets 30% and 50% as interim goals for educational attainment benchmarks for all races and ethnicities.

While improvements in the overall educational attainment rate have been made, the state must do more to remove barriers and increase the postsecondary attainment of BIPOC communities. As of 2022, 107,000 Minnesotans will need to earn a credential to meet the 70% goal. An estimated 89,843 of the credentials needed to reach the 70% goal must come from BIPOC communities. The state must increase the support to BIPOC communities in their path to postsecondary attainment, so they have access to employment at the family-sustaining wages necessary for increased quality of life for their families. Without providing additional

support to these communities to increase their educational attainment, it is not likely that Minnesota will reach its 70% goal.

Long-term Goals:

- Increase Minnesota's educational attainment rate so that each of Minnesota's communities (age 25-44) achieves a 70% educational attainment rate.

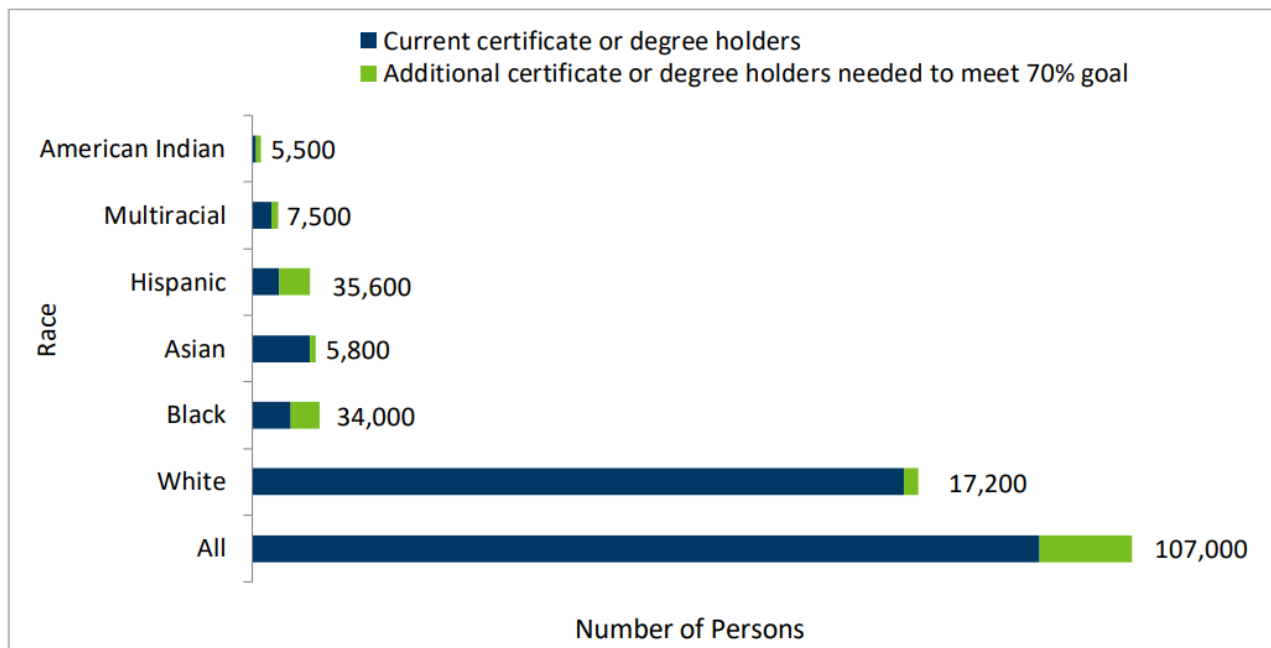
Measurable Goals for 2025:

- Increase the number of postsecondary credentials earned within targeted communities so that all Minnesota's communities achieve a 70% educational attainment rate:
 - American Indian individuals by 5,500
 - Asian individuals by 5,800
 - Black individuals by 34,000
 - Multiracial individuals by 7,500
 - Hispanic or Latino individuals by 35,600

Strategies:

- Partner with community organizations and higher education institutions and advocacy groups to identify targeted efforts that will better support BIPOC communities, incarcerated individuals, student parents seeking to obtain a postsecondary credential, survivors of sexual violence and harassment, and adults seeking to obtain a postsecondary credential.
- Advocate for increased state funding to support evidence-based policies and practices that are shown to increase student completion. This could include eliminating registration holds for unpaid balances, summer bridge programs, proactive advising, credit for prior learning, transparent pathways to academic credit for non-academic and work-based learning, opt-out scheduling, etc.
- Develop and fund evidence-based mentoring and support services for all Pell and State Grant recipients.
- Increase efforts to understand and support the needs of students with dependent children
- Advocate for increased state funding for the Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students grant program to double the number of postsecondary institutions participating (from 14 to 28) and meet existing and future demand to reduce the number of students dropping out of postsecondary due to short-term financial emergencies and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Leverage the P-20 Partnership to work collaboratively with higher education stakeholders, higher education institutions, and state agencies to cultivate better systems of support for students and advancing recruitment efforts.

Figure 1: Persons with a Certificate or Higher Credential, Age 25-44, and Number Yet Needed to Reach 70% Goal by Basic Race Groups, 2022 Estimates



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

Access: Expand Postsecondary Participation

Context:

A key lever to achieving Minnesota's educational attainment goal, and more importantly improving the lives of Minnesotans, is:

- increasing postsecondary participation of recent high school graduates
- collaborating with the Department of Corrections to support ongoing effort to implement FAFSA completion by currently incarcerated students to increase the number of incarcerated individuals participating in a postsecondary program leading to a credential, and
- increasing the number of adults with no college and with some college, but no degree pursuing a postsecondary credential

Among 2021 Minnesota high school graduates, 34% of American Indians, 45% of Hispanic or Latino students, 55% of Black students, 67% of Asians, and 65% of White graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately after high school. (Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, 2021). Fall enrollment is important because students who delay enrollment in college are less likely to complete a college certificate or degree (Lin & Liu, 2019). Therefore, gaps in immediate postsecondary enrollment directly affect college

completion. A key lever to achieving Minnesota's educational attainment goal, and more importantly improving the lives of Minnesotans, is increasing postsecondary participation of recent high school graduates.

Long-term Goals:

- Increase the number of high school seniors completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A recent report estimated that 14,200 high school seniors in Minnesota could have received a Pell Grant but did not because they failed to complete the FAFSA and enroll in a postsecondary institution. This represents \$57 million in Federal Pell Grants.¹
- Increase the number of students enrolling in a postsecondary program immediately following high school graduation.
- Increase the number of adults with no college and with some college, but no degree pursuing a postsecondary credential.
- Increase awareness around high-value/high-need degree programs.
- Expand the work and reach of College Outreach initiatives, including Minnesota Goes to College and the MN College Access Network.
- Increase programs and training to support K-12 students (direct admissions, resources for counselors to better communicate options).

Measurable Goals for 2023:

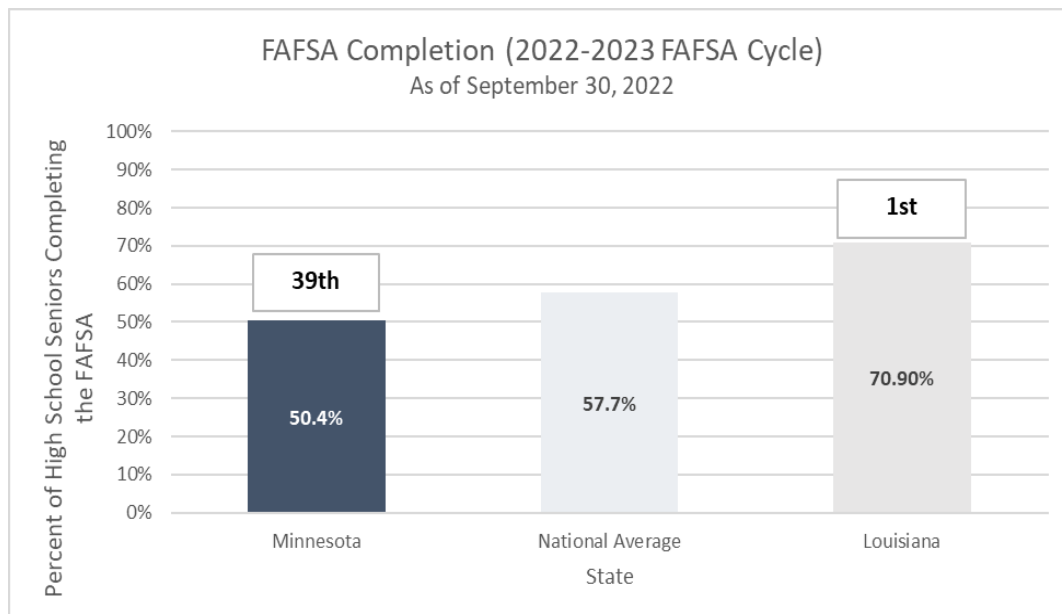
- FAFSA Completion: Increase the number of Minnesota high school seniors completing the FAFSA before high school graduation, especially for underserved communities – adopt the 5% percentage points every year goal.
- Postsecondary Participation of High School Graduates: Increase the percentage of high school graduates enrolling in postsecondary institutions immediately following high school graduation to 72%. This will result in increases in participants for the following communities:
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native – 294 additional students
 - Black and African American – 1,017 additional students
 - Hispanic or Latino – 1,334 additional students
 - Asian – 205 additional students
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 6 additional students
 - White – 2,972 additional students. Students identifying two or more races – 401 additional students. Students receiving free or reduced-price meals – 3,976 additional students
- Adults without a Postsecondary Credential: To reach Minnesota's 70% attainment goal, Minnesota needs an additional 107,000 individuals who do not have a credential to complete a credential by 2025. A key path for achieving the attainment goal is to increase the number of adults without any credentials enrolling or re-enrolling in postsecondary education or training programs.

¹ Level Up Coalition. (2019). *Prioritizing FAFSA Completion in Minnesota*. Retrieved from <https://levelupcoalition.org/> on October 18, 2019.

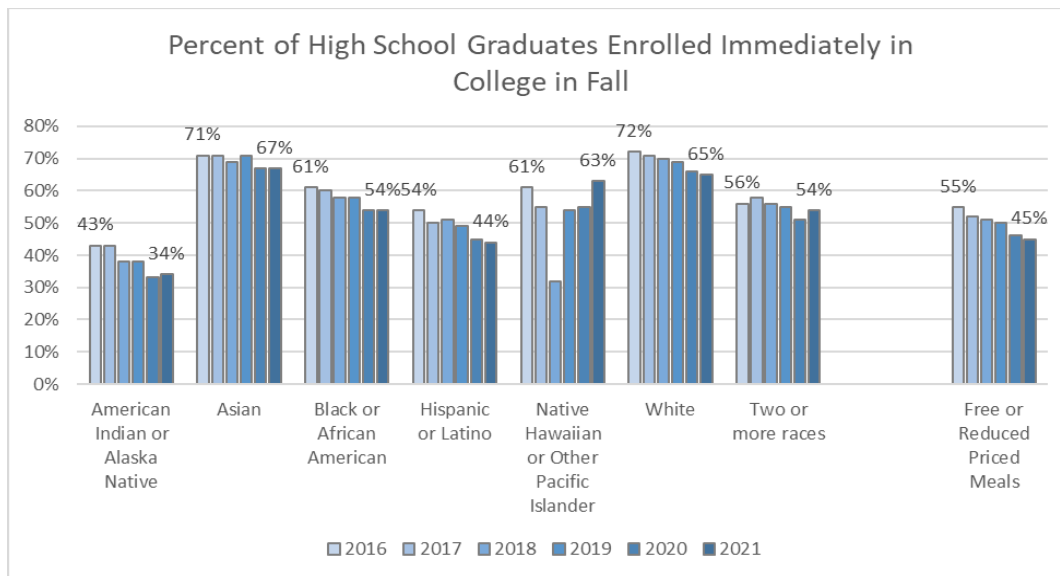
- Develop scholarship and transition support models for seniors graduating from Get Ready programs as they enroll in post-secondary programs.

Strategies:

- Develop a marketing plan around My Higher Ed to help people plan for college.
- Secure funding to hire a Tribal Relations, Public Engagement and DEI Director.
 - Continue engagement and outreach efforts
 - Develop a dynamic public engagement strategic plan
- Collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Education and other community partners to meet yearly FAFSA goals.
 - Host Ready, Set, FAFSA events, a twice-a-year series of public meetings that break down financial aid myths and help families apply
- Expand the number of culturally competent financial literacy tools and outreach services OHE provides statewide.
 - Expand the number of languages OHE's materials are published into four
 - Conduct 130 presentations and present in 40 additional communities
- Collaborate with community organizations on targeted programming for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities to provide culturally relevant information about postsecondary training opportunities and available financial aid.



Source: National College Access Network



Source: [SLEDs](https://sleds.mn.gov) (<https://sleds.mn.gov>)

Affordability: Ensure a Postsecondary Credential Remains Affordable for All Students and Their Families

Context:

Affordability is one determining factor in whether an individual enrolls in college. As an agency, we define affordability as our ability to ensure equitable access to higher education based on each individual student and/or family's unique financial circumstances.

A commitment to affordability is core to OHE's work. As college costs continue to rise faster than family incomes and increases in both federal and state higher education funding, Minnesota has invested in both institutional appropriations and need-based financial aid families and students still juggle work, class, and family responsibilities to enroll in and complete college.

The historic investments made by Minnesota in higher education require mindful maintenance. Student financial aid must be responsive to college costs, family income, and economic conditions. Institutions require adequate appropriations to ensure moderate tuition levels and to provide resources to ensure satisfactory operations and student supports. The true measure of Minnesota's effectiveness at managing its investments is its students' outcomes. For students, college is never affordable unless they complete it.

Long-term Goal:

- Ensure affordability of postsecondary education for students and families with lower- to middle-incomes

Measurable Goals for 2023:

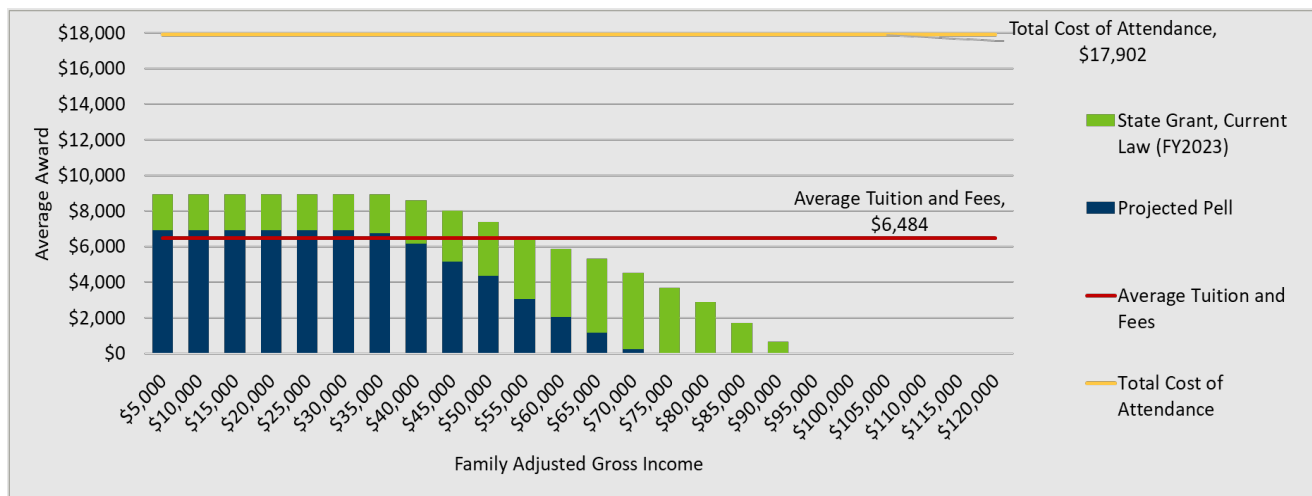
- Using a combination of Pell Grants, State Grants, institutional grants, and other non-loan-based financial aid, reduce the financial burden on students and families with the lowest incomes. This will be done by ensuring that 100% of tuition and mandatory fees are covered at Minnesota public institutions for students from families with incomes below Minnesota's median household income (\$68,411)²
- Reduce the financial burden on students and families with middle incomes to a level that is reasonable given their income and assets

Strategies:

Strategies to reduce the financial burden on the low- and middle-income students:

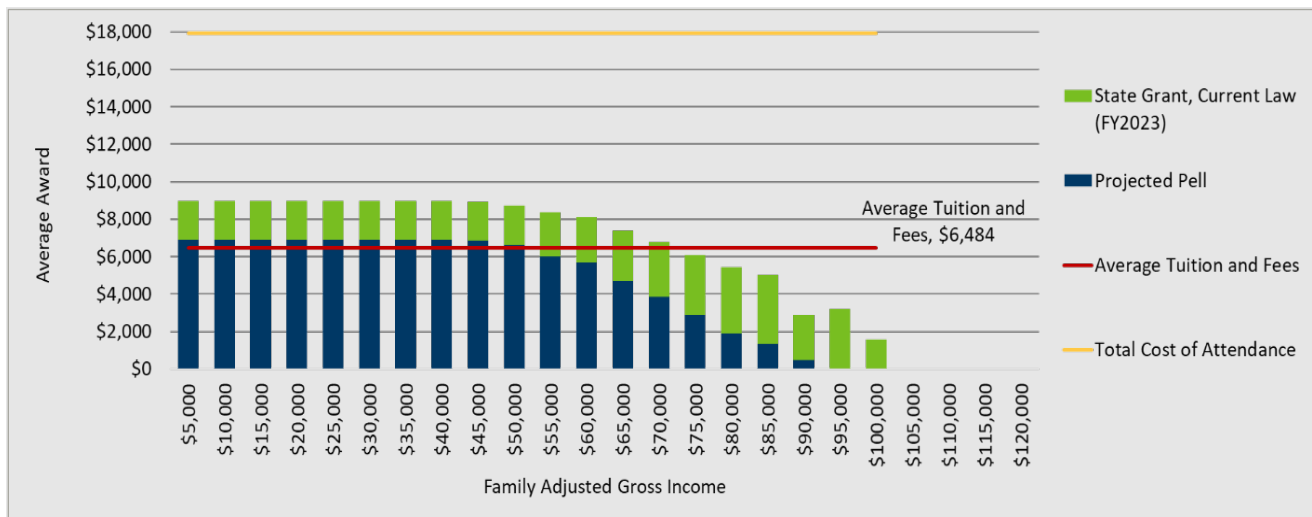
- Establish and fund innovative targeted financial aid programs to support students and families with incomes below Minnesota's median household income
- Increase investments in State Grants to increase the State Grant's Living and Miscellaneous Expense Allowance from 106% of the poverty level to 110%. This ensures that students have access to financial aid for basic needs above a poverty-level living standard

2023 Estimated Full-Time Federal Pell and Minnesota State Grants for Dependent Students with \$0-\$55,000 AGI at Minnesota State Colleges (2-Year)

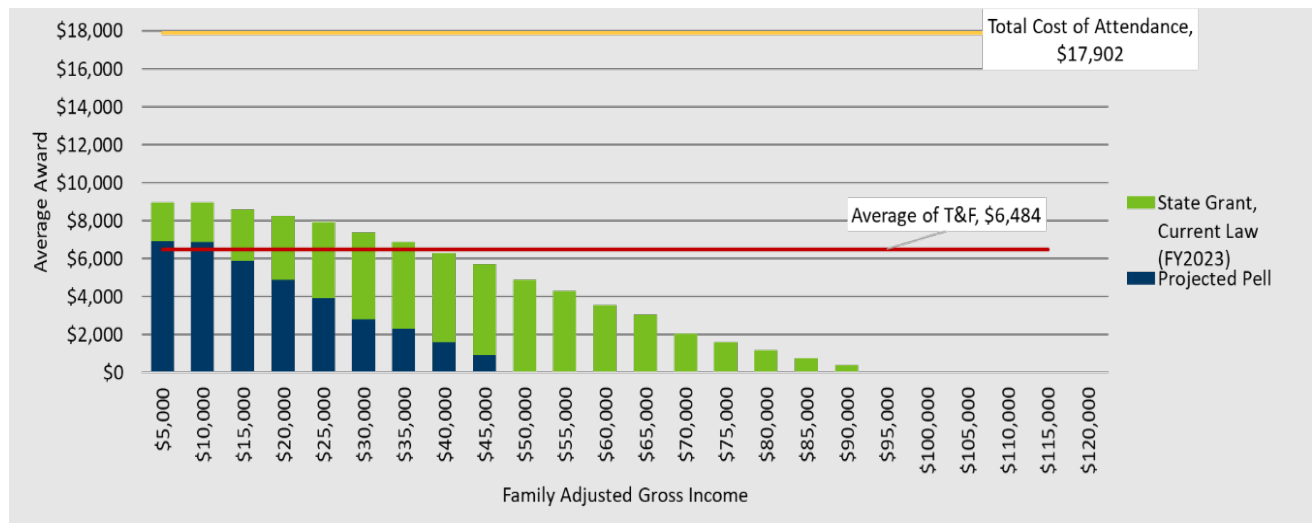


² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MN/INC110218#INC110218>

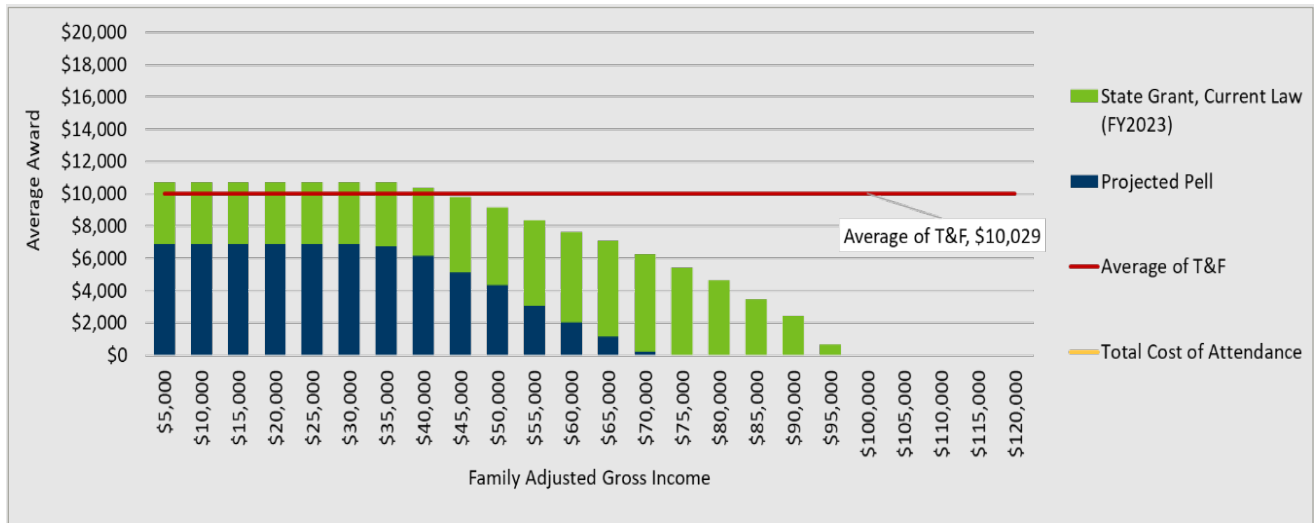
2023 Estimated Full-Time Federal Pell and Minnesota State Grants for Independent Students with Children with \$0-\$70,000 AGI at Minnesota State Colleges (Two-Year)



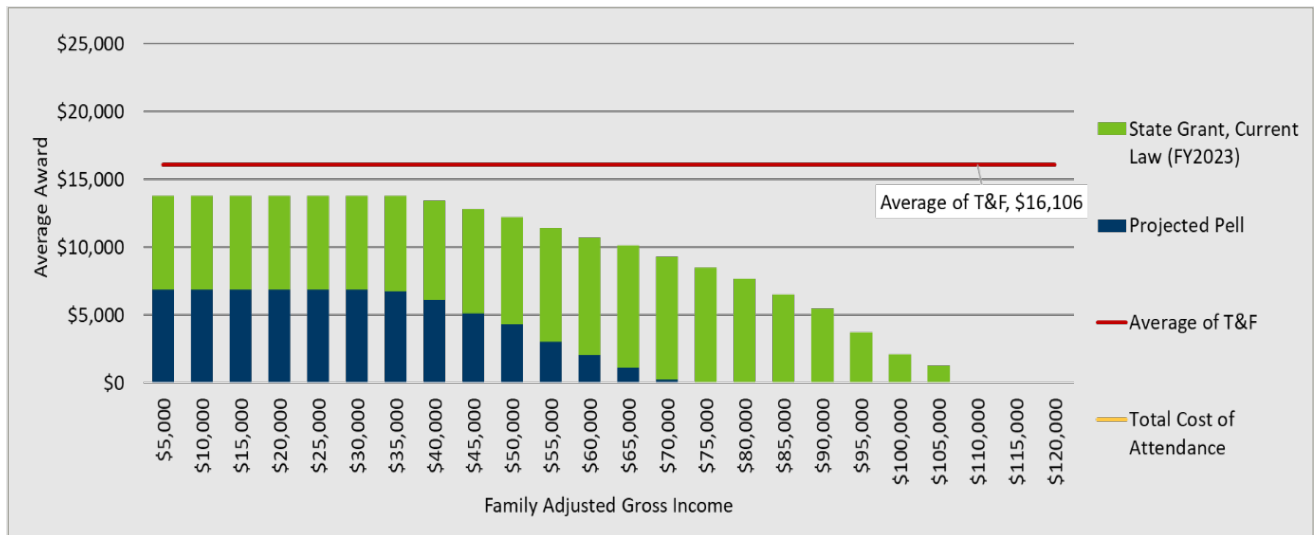
2023 Estimated Full-Time Federal Pell and Minnesota State Grants for Independent Students without Children with \$0-\$35,000 AGI at Minnesota State Colleges (Two-Year)



2023 Estimated Full-Time Federal Pell and Minnesota State Grants for Dependent Students with \$0-\$40,000 AGI at Minnesota State Universities (Two-Year)

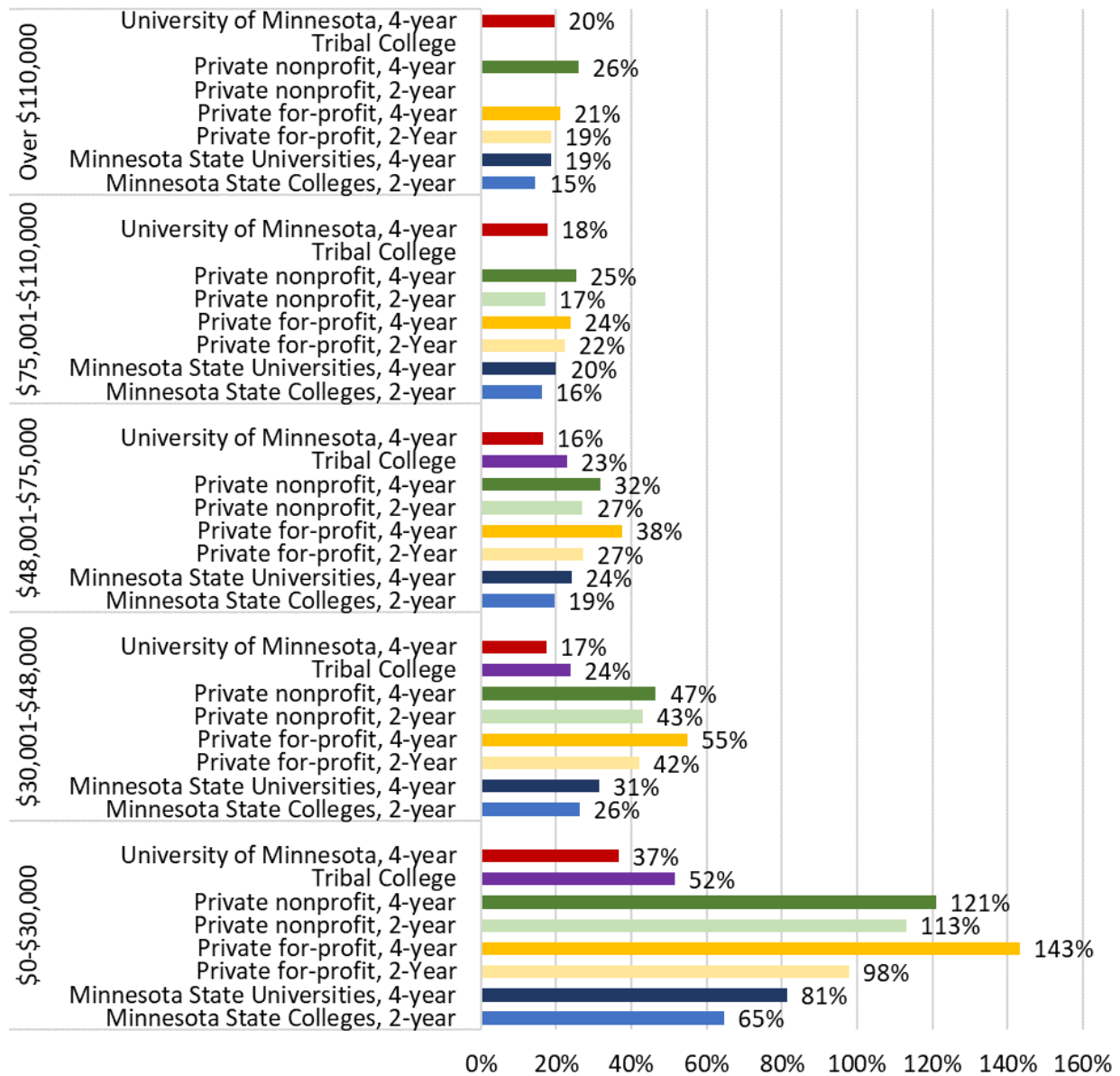


Estimated Full-Time Federal Pell and Minnesota State Grants for Dependent Students at the University of Minnesota Fiscal Year 2022



Goal 2: Reduce Burden for Middle Income Families

Average Net Price 2020-2021 as Percent of Annual Family Income



Source: IPEDS

Strategies to reduce the financial burden on students:

- Expand access to the Child Care Grant program by simplifying the program's award formula, leveraging information from the FAFSA to better target program information to student parents, increasing strategic partnerships with student-parent supporting organizations, and reducing the administrative paperwork burdens on students and colleges

- Increase utilization of the State Work Study program by moving from the federal Expected Family Contribution (EFC) when determining eligibility to other income-based measures of eligibility.
- Support the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State system investments to ensure increased student success and limit the need for tuition and fee increases
- FAFSA Completion: Increase the number of Minnesota high school seniors completing the FAFSA before high school graduation, especially for underserved communities by 5 percentage points a year

Affordability: Financial Literacy and Student Success Initiatives for SELF Borrowers

Context:

The SELF Loan program exists to help Minnesota students, and students attending eligible Minnesota postsecondary institutions, fulfill their postsecondary dreams by investing in their success through long-term, low-interest student loans and student support services. Low-cost student loan refinancing is available through SELF Refi to help Minnesota residents manage their student loan debt after completing their formal education. Every student's lifetime success is our priority.

Since its inception in 1985, the SELF Loan program has helped hundreds of thousands of students attend college by providing more than \$2.4 billion in student loans. The program does not receive any state appropriations and is funded through the sale of revenue bonds and the payment of interest and principal on the loans.

Using a student-centric approach in all aspects of the SELF and SELF Refi Loan programs from the application process to repayment options ensures that we are continuously taking into consideration the impact that borrowing has on students and empowering them to be informed borrowers.

The SELF Loan program has made an investment in the development and implementation of a Student Success Program that provides success coaching, resource navigation and wrap-around support for loan borrowers. These services help students maintain momentum on their postsecondary pathway. When students can persist and graduate with their degree, it leads to greater opportunities for career growth and higher income potential over their lifetime.

Long-term Goals:

- Maintain low-cost interest rates for borrowers
- Become the leader among state-based student loan providers in adopting policies, practices, tools, and resources to aid students in achieving their educational goals and career aspirations
- Hire additional staff to establish a more proactive and student-centric operation that can provide more intentional outreach and support in areas that often present roadblocks
- Provide relevant, timely and engaging financial literacy content that stakeholders can access to help inform their borrowing decisions
- Strategically implement marketing efforts to highlight the benefits of SELF and SELF Refi Loans
- Reduce the number of students who default on their loans

Measurable Goals for 2023:

- Hire and onboard additional SELF Loan staff including Student Success Coaches and operations support
- Develop a strategic marketing plan for SELF and SELF Refi
- Beginning in Fall 2023, launch the SELF Success Coaching program for all first-time, first-year loan borrowers
- Begin Phase I of the SELF Enhancing Financial Literacy project to gather and understand the empirically based best practices and relevant research findings from which a financial literacy education program will be designed, implemented, and delivered in subsequent years

Strategies:

- Work with Human Resources to approve new positions and use best recruitment practices to hire people who support our mission
- Hire an experienced Marketing Manager with the skills to develop this new position and a strategic marketing plan to increase awareness of the SELF and SELF Refi programs
- Prepare for the implementation and customization of the Success Coaching database
- To ensure everything is ready for coaching in August 2023, integrate Success Coaching into the SELF program through marketing and website development, onboarding and training of coaches
- Select and collaborate with a vendor for Phase I of the Financial Literacy project

Accountability: Increase Cross-Agency Data Usage to Impact Minnesota's Generational Problems

Context:

Part of OHE's ability to be accountable to the public is through transparency, in reporting and data. The State of Minnesota relies on agencies' ability to leverage data across administrative systems to track progress, monitor outcomes, evaluate effectiveness, and inform decision-making. Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) and Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLS) play an essential role in measuring long-term outcomes related to state investments in early care, education and workforce programs and systems for Minnesota communities. Additionally, statewide data helps inform stakeholders' decisions, so they may find solutions that lead individuals to successful outcomes in education, work, and life. Specific examples include using information about Minnesota public high school graduates who enrolled in developmental courses within two years of their high school graduation at Minnesota postsecondary institutions to create the legislatively mandated Getting Prepared report. It also includes broadly tracking the college participation rates of high school graduates overall and by demographics for the Minnesota Measures Report. These examples show how SLEDs

and ECLDS provide the “go-to” source for understanding equitable outcomes in young children, their development, and the transitions between education and the workforce to improve the lives of all Minnesotans.

Long-term Goal:

- Foster greater interagency collaboration to impact Minnesota’s generational problems by expanding and increasing agency use of data. This shrinks the distance between data and policy development

Measurable Goals for 2023:

- Collaborate across agencies to develop standard outcomes measures and methods using SLEDs and ECLDS data to evaluate state-funded targeted interventions addressing longitudinal and inter-generational challenges (e.g., total wages paid 1-year pre-participation and 2, 5, and 10-years post-participating for program participants in higher education programs)
- Add geographic and community-based data to better inform local-level reporting
- Develop new pathway reports that help policymakers understand the movement of individual students between E-12, higher education, and the workforce
- Increase agencies and external researchers' usage of SLEDs and ECLDS from 54 total reports to 65 reports
- Increase public usage of SLEDs and ECLDS as indicated by an increase in the number of e-mail subscribers from 2,095 to 2,500, and the number of monthly page views from 10,711 to 13,000
- Identify and remove barriers limiting agencies’ use of SLEDs and ECLDS data to accomplish agency goals, and develop an action plan to remove barriers to user participation
- Develop new migration reports that show the movement of students, graduates, and dropouts across state lines

Strategies:

- Increase the number of data products for use by local schools and school districts and colleges in program planning and student outcomes reporting
- Increase the number of agencies that partner with SLEDs and incorporate additional existing data from state agencies to allow stakeholders and researchers to answer critical questions and evaluate targeted interventions
- Double the number of SLEDs and ECLDS training presentations from 48 per year to 96 per year by leveraging staff of local educational service cooperatives. Note that training was paused during COVID-19, as schools were focused on remote learning and student needs