



# Lumina State Attainment Collaborative Cohort Update: March 2026

## State Progress Highlights

Across Lumina's State Attainment Collaborative (SAC) cohort, states are making significant progress in engaging stakeholders to advance value-centered attainment goals. A few examples:

**Oregon** has convened a diverse steering committee to lead the development of a new statewide postsecondary attainment goal. The committee is interested in crafting a goal focused specifically on higher education rather than the state's [current approach](#), which also includes high school attainment.

The committee includes legislators, higher education leaders, workforce and economic development representatives, business voices, students, and faculty. An introductory meeting on Dec. 19, 2025, reviewed the existing state goal, the SAC context, and the overall goal-setting process.

Early discussions have emphasized clearly articulating the value of higher education and its connection to Oregon's workforce and economy, while considering perspectives about the appropriate balance between economic outcomes, access, and equity. At the Jan. 23 meeting, Oregon's SAC team shared data on workforce shortages, economic demand, and the link between postsecondary attainment and economic outcomes. The committee began identifying which value components should anchor the new goal.

Additional discussion included:

- Revisiting a previously developed credentials of value framework

- Addressing attainment gaps for underserved populations
- Aligning credential production with key industries.

The committee will continue this work through monthly meetings.

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In **Illinois**, Governor Pritzker recently signed an [Executive Order](#) to form a cross-sector State Attainment Working Group to recommend a new attainment goal for credentials of value by Dec. 1. The Working Group includes participation from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and—uniquely—Illinois Department of Human Services (human services/wraparound supports), Illinois Department of Corrections (justice-impacted populations), and Illinois Department of Health (demographic trends).

The Executive Order cites changing demographics, growing workforce needs, and federal threats—including the Trump administration’s attacks on college access—as context for Illinois’ commitment to:

- Defining **credentials of value** based on labor market demand and economic return
- Analyzing workforce needs
- Developing goals that eliminate disparities by race, income, geography, and first-generation status.

The key challenge: Illinois faces extreme attainment disparities (ranging from 18 percent to above 60 percent across counties). Regional stakeholder engagement will be critical to ensure downstate and rural communities are meaningfully included and to address the perception that attainment is "a Chicago thing."

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**Maryland** responded to stakeholder concern with the term “value” by coining the term **Lighthouse Degrees and Credentials** to describe credentials aligned to workforce needs. The term builds on the state’s strategic investment in three “lighthouse” sectors: Life Sciences, Technology, and Aerospace. The State Plan Steering Committee responded positively to the new framing.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission also presented its attainment goal: **By 2040, 75 percent of adults in Maryland’s labor force will hold a credential that prepares them for informed citizenship and success in the global economy.**

This goal will be measured by:

- The percentage of Maryland residents age 25–64 with a post-high school degree, certificate, or certification
- Wages and salaries at least 15% above the high school graduate’s median earnings
- With emphasis on mid-career adults age 25–44.

All degrees and credentials will be expected to meet a Maryland definition of value by 2035, which will ultimately be measured by:

- *Program-level ROI*
- *Labor market participation and earnings*
- *Civic and community impact.*

You can review Maryland’s most recent draft of goals and State Plan Roadmap [in this PDF](#).

## Common Questions

As states move from goal-setting into implementation, we’ve noticed several recurring questions, including:

- **How are states considering using the grant?** States are exploring options such as:
  - Data analysis to identify state-specific wage thresholds and related attainment rates
  - A Lightcast supply/demand analysis to help identify under- and oversupplied credentials
  - Strategic communication plan development
  - Facilitation for stakeholder engagement
- **What is the role for completion or production metrics?** Completion or production metrics are practical levers that states and institutions can use to drive progress toward value centered attainment goals. They operate at the institution and system level, helping align policy and practice across higher education and workforce partners in service of a broader population goal: increasing the share of adults with credentials of value.

Last month's webinar (February 23rd) and [associated materials](#) explored this topic in more depth. Please reach out with additional follow-up questions.

## Looking Ahead

Please mark your calendars for two upcoming learning opportunities:

- **Thursday, March 19 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET: *Strategic Support of Focus Populations*.** This session will provide concrete strategies to identify focus populations, analyze and collect data, and develop targeted outreach strategies.
- **Wednesday, April 8 from 3:30-5:00 p.m. ET: *Running Your Own Attainment Analysis*.** This session will walk through how to use ACS and NTEWS data to run state-specific attainment analyses with an adjusted wage threshold.



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