

MONTANA

**STATE SUMMARY
2025**

Montana at a glance

THE STATE OPPORTUNITY INDEX combines research-backed strategies for improving education-to-career outcomes with benchmarking measures to track progress for all 50 states, giving policymakers and institutions a framework for strengthening the link between education and opportunity.

For each state, the Index reports the percentage of students who experience a positive return on investment and summarizes progress in five key areas for improving success beyond completion: Clear Outcomes, Quality Coaching, Affordability, Work-Based Learning, and Employer Alignment. States are grouped into four categories: Leading (at the forefront, demonstrating strong progress); Advanced (substantial progress); Developing (early stages of improvement); and Foundational (just beginning their journey).

Positive ROI

64%



**State
Opportunity
Index**

strada

Learn more at strada.org/state-opportunity-index

References for "unavailable" refer to states in which there was insufficient data to assign a rating at this time.
In cases where the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.

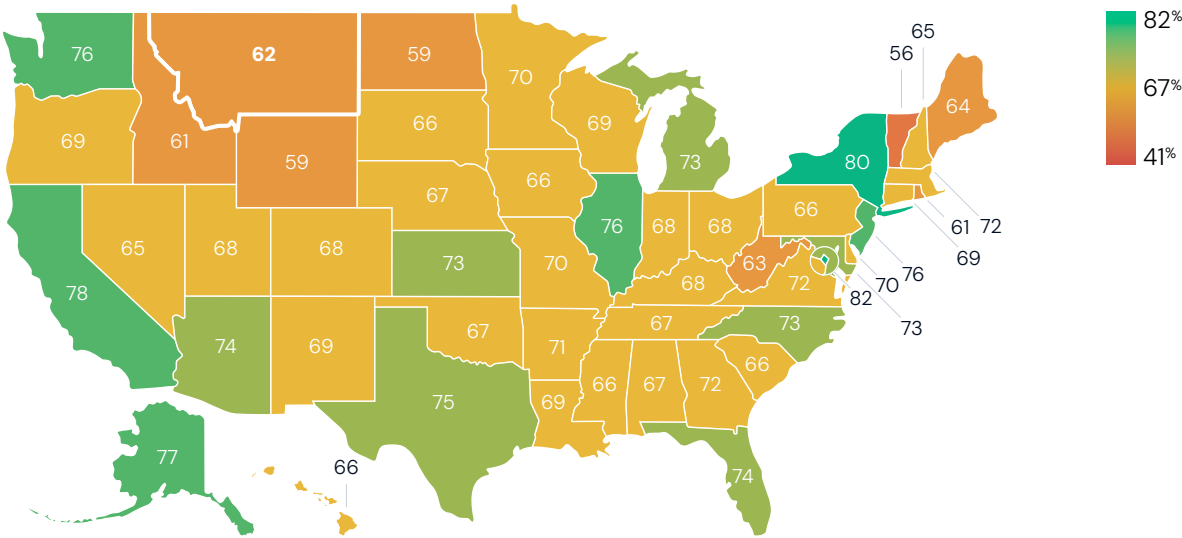
Positive ROI

Montana

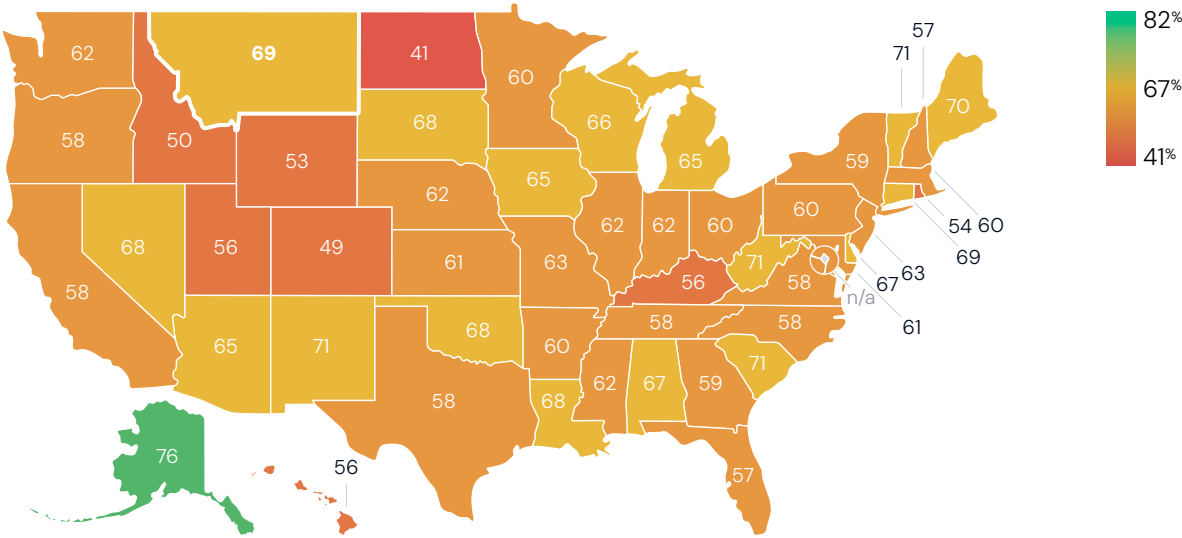
The positive ROI value for each state represents the estimated percentage of public college graduates whose earnings premium over high school graduates is enough to repay their total cost of a degree within 10 years.

	Montana	U.S.
Overall	64%	70%
Bachelor's	62%	73%
Associate	69%	60%

Percentage of graduates with positive 10-year ROI by state – bachelor's degrees



Percentage of graduates with positive 10-year ROI by state – associate degrees





Everyone should have access to accurate information on employment outcomes that can help them make informed decisions about education after high school. The Clear Outcomes measure is based on 10 critical elements that contribute to the capacity of state education-to-employment data systems to strengthen the connection between education and opportunity.

COLLECT

State data system elements	State description	Rating
1 Includes learner-level and program characteristic data for nondegree and noncredit postsecondary education and training programs	Montana collects enrollment and credential outcomes data for (i) college-issued, for-credit nondegree certificate programs; (ii) college-issued, noncredit nondegree credentials; and (iii) WIOA-eligible training providers. The state links these college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials to employment outcomes.	ADVANCED
2 Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location	Montana does not collect any of the three enhanced elements, and Strada's research did not demonstrate any emerging collection policy.	FOUNDATIONAL

INTEGRATE

State data system elements	State description	Rating
3 Integrates and delivers information on learner's earnings and employment after postsecondary education and training completion, and over time	Montana has integrated and published several key types of postsecondary education and employment data, including: (i) public four-year institutions to employment, with public downloadable data and a public interactive reporting tool available through the Montana University System Student Success Dashboard , and (ii) community colleges to employment, with public downloadable data and a public interactive reporting tool available through the Montana University System Student Success Dashboard . Employment outcomes for public four-year institutions and community colleges are all disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and family income/economically disadvantaged status. WIOA-eligible training providers-to-employment data are not publicly available through a state site. Montana does not integrate and publish data on private four-year institutions to employment.	ADVANCED
4 Integrates and delivers information on learner's earnings and employment after high school completion and over time	Montana's Education and Workforce Governing Board identified employment outcomes of high school graduates as a key policy question in its recently published research agenda .	DEVELOPING
5 Partners with national and multi-state initiatives to assess education-to-opportunity outcomes for graduates and non-graduates of postsecondary education and training programs who relocate or work outside the state	Montana partners with PSEO (>75% graduate coverage) and State Wage Interchange System.	ADVANCED

CATEGORY KEY

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure.

● **Leading**
Fully present

● **Advanced**
Partially present

● **Developing**
In development

● **Foundational**
Not in development



PROVIDE

State data system elements	State description	Rating
6 Provides comprehensive and timely open data files containing anonymized education-to-opportunity statistics that anyone can access, download, and otherwise use	Montana has downloadable data tables from interactive dashboards with various education-to-opportunity metrics such as earnings, enrollment, and completion by program for (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) public two-year institutions; and (iii) nondegree credentials, with disaggregation by race/ethnicity, gender, and family income/economically disadvantaged status.	LEADING
7 Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions	Montana publishes dashboards with various education-to-opportunity metrics such as earnings, enrollment, and completion by program for (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) public two-year institutions; and (iii) nondegree credentials, with disaggregation by race/ethnicity, gender, and family income/economically disadvantaged status.	LEADING
8 Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets	In 2023, Montana established the Education and Workforce Data Governing Board . The Board is responsible for drafting policies and processes related to education-to-employment data sharing, including regarding research requests. The Board has published a research agenda , so future requests can be evaluated for their alignment with state priorities.	DEVELOPING

(...) IMPACT

State data system elements	State description	Rating
9 Enables learners and earners to access and utilize their own verified data, unlocking opportunities for college and career advancement	Montana received SkillsFWD grant funding to pilot an LER statewide. Accelerate Montana , a portfolio of workforce and economic development programs affiliated with the University of Montana, leads this initiative. Accelerate Montana, in partnership with Credential Engine , launched the statewide credential and skills registry to make credentials, skills, and career pathways more accessible to learners, earners, and employers across Montana.	LEADING
10 Designates a unit with responsibility and dedicated, full-time capacity for generating education-to-employment insights to inform state policymaking and resource allocation decision-making	The Education and Workforce Data Governing Board includes the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Commissioner of Labor and Industry, among other policymakers. It is responsible for drafting policies and processes related to education-to-employment data sharing and use.	DEVELOPING

CATEGORY KEY

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure.



Leading
Fully present



Advanced
Partially present



Developing
In development



Foundational
Not in development



Quality Coaching

Montana

FOUR-YEAR

UNAVAILABLE

TWO-YEAR

UNAVAILABLE

Everyone should have access to coaching that helps them reflect on their talents and interests, choose a career goal, chart a path, and navigate challenges. Graduates who receive such guidance are more likely to land a job that requires a degree and feel satisfied with their career trajectory. The Quality Coaching measure is based on the percentage of two-year students and four-year senior students who reported receiving personalized guidance, timely labor market information, and support to create a plan and overcome barriers.

Personalized guidance	Four-year	Two-year
Percentage of students at public institutions who report receiving personalized coaching or guidance to help select the education that will help prepare them for a successful career.	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE
Timely labor market information	Four-year	Two-year
The average share of students at public institutions who receive timely labor market information, across the various types below, before enrolling or during their first year.	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE
Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for student's strengths and interests		
Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to		
Potential earnings in different careers related to student's education program		
Career outcomes of students from their own institution		
Support	Four-year	Two-year
The average share of students at public institutions who receive at least some support in setting goals and in overcoming obstacles.	UNAVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE
Setting education and career goals and developing a plan to achieve these goals		
Identifying and overcoming barriers		
CATEGORY KEY		
When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.	● Leading ≥75%	● Advanced 50% to <75%
	● Developing 25% to <50%	● Foundational <25%
National results	Four-year	Two-year
Personalized guidance	34%	45%
Timely labor market information	21%	33%
Support	71%	74%



Affordability

Montana

FOUR-YEAR

FOUNDATIONAL

TWO-YEAR

LEADING

Quality post-high school programs should be within everyone's financial reach, allowing for equitable opportunities for success. The Affordability measure is based on how many hours a week the average student would need to work to cover the in-state net price (total cost of attendance minus any grants and scholarships), how many hours a student from a low-income family would need to work to cover their typical in-state net price, and the percentage of students that complete their degree on time – a critical factor in the cost of a degree.

Student hours of work needed	Four-year	Two-year		
Average student hours of work needed	FOUNDATIONAL 34 hours per week Average annual net price, four-year institutions: \$16,296	ADVANCED 15 hours per week Average annual net price, two-year institutions: \$9,682		
Low-income student hours of work needed	DEVELOPING 25 hours per week Average annual net price for low-income students, four-year institutions: \$13,261	LEADING 8 hours per week Average annual net price for low-income students, two-year institutions: \$7,234		
CATEGORY KEY	Leading <10 hrs	Advanced 10 to <20 hrs	Developing 20 to <30 hrs	Foundational ≥30 hrs

On-time completion rate		Four-year			
On-time completion rate		FOUNDATIONAL			
		31%			
CATEGORY KEY		● Leading ≥65%	● Advanced 50% to <65%	● Developing 35% to <50%	● Foundational <35%



Work-Based Learning

Montana

FOUR-YEAR

UNAVAILABLE

TWO-YEAR

UNAVAILABLE

All students should have access to quality work-based learning experiences, such as paid internships and apprenticeships, that are linked to higher earnings, greater job satisfaction, and lower underemployment. The Work-Based Learning measure is based on the percentage of two-year students and four-year senior students who reported participating in at least one of the following types of paid experiences: paid internship, paid apprenticeship, paid co-op, paid practicum, or paid undergraduate research experience.

Quality Work-Based Learning		Four-year	Two-year		
Percentage of students at public institutions who participated in at least one of five types of quality paid work-based learning experiences		UNAVAILABLE		UNAVAILABLE	
CATEGORY KEY					
When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.		Leading ≥75%	Advanced 50% to <75%	Developing 25% to <50%	Foundational <25%
National results		Four-year	Two-year		
Any quality paid work-based learning experience		43%	17%		
Paid internship		37%	14%		
Any work-based learning experience (paid or unpaid)		72%	33%		



In addition to student self-reporting of apprenticeship participation, states have other sources of information on participation in registered apprenticeships via the U.S. Department of Labor. In Montana, **0.43 percent** of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of **2,515 apprentices**. Across the country, this number ranges from 0.9 percent (Hawaii) to 0.12 percent (Oklahoma). In countries with leading apprenticeship systems, such as Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and England, apprentices constitute about 2.5–3.0 percent of the labor force, so all states in the U.S. have substantial room for improvement.



Employer Alignment

FOUNDATIONAL

Montana

Students should have access to programs that lead to quality jobs and mobility, and employers should assess and advance individuals based on skills and experiences, not just degrees. The Employer Alignment measure is based on the percentage of terminal bachelor's degree holders aged 25–34 employed in a college-level job as well as the supply/demand ratio for a variety of high-demand, high-wage jobs in each state.

College-level employment

The percentage of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed in college-level positions

DEVELOPING

Supply/demand ratio

The overall ratio: the average of the entry-level supply/demand ratios for these nine opportunity occupational groups

FOUNDATIONAL

Information technology and business

Data analytics

LEADING

Finance and accounting professionals

FOUNDATIONAL

Finance and accounting support

FOUNDATIONAL

Information and cybersecurity

LEADING

Software development and engineering

LEADING

Health care

Health care technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

Nursing

FOUNDATIONAL

Manufacturing and engineering

Engineering

ADVANCED

Manufacturing/Trades technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

CATEGORY KEY

● **Leading**
≥75%

● **Advanced**
60% to <75%

● **Developing**
50% to <60%

● **Foundational**
<50%