



# TENNESSEE

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STATE SUMMARY  
2025

# Tennessee 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

65%



**State  
Opportunity  
Index**

**strada**

Learn more at [strada.org/state-opportunity-index](https://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.



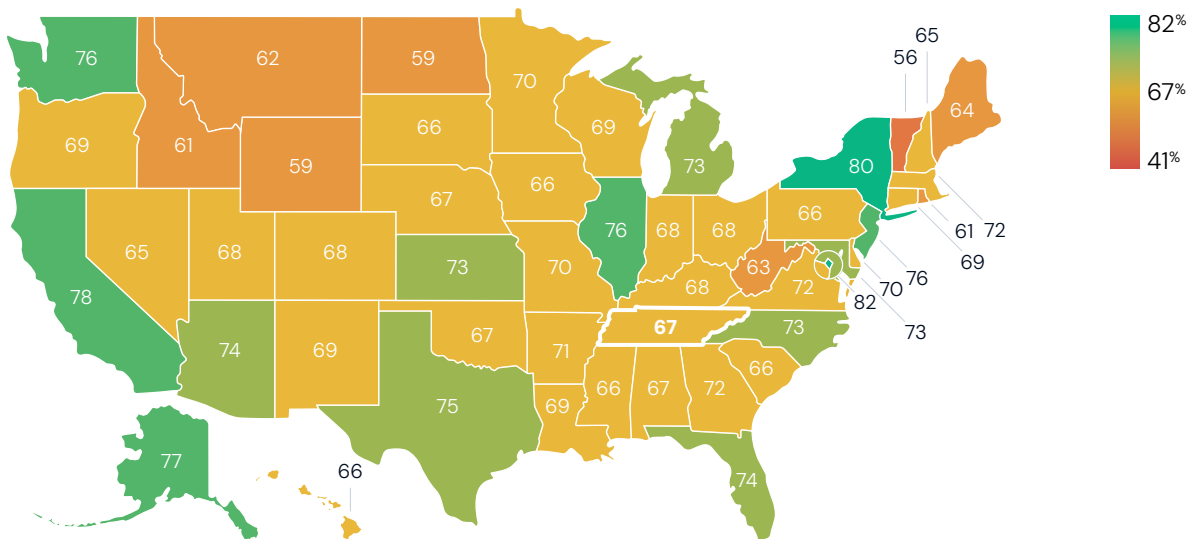
# Positive ROI

Tennessee

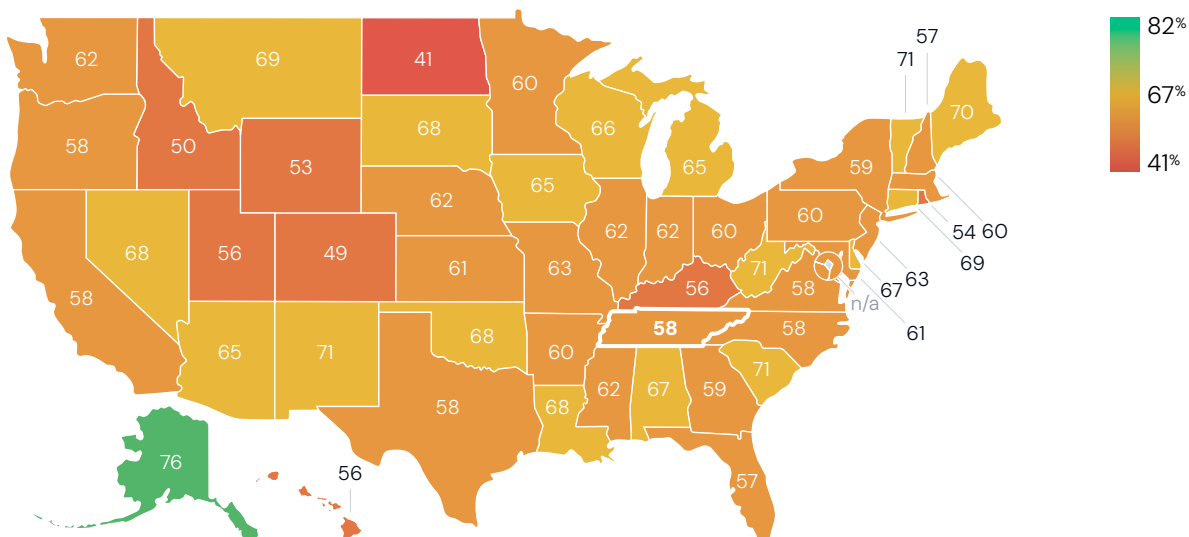
The positive ROI value for each state represents the estimated percentage of public college graduates whose earnings premium over high school graduates is enough to repay their total cost of a degree within 10 years.

|                   | Tennessee | U.S. |
|-------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Overall</b>    | 65%       | 70%  |
| <b>Bachelor's</b> | 67%       | 73%  |
| <b>Associate</b>  | 58%       | 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 | Tennessee collects enrollment and credential outcomes for multiple nondegree and noncredit programs, including: (i) college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials; (ii) college-issued, noncredit nondegree credentials through occupational training; and (iii) other third-party credentials, namely apprenticeships and industry certifications. The state links college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials to <a href="#">employment outcomes</a> . | ADVANCED |
| 2 Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location                                                                     | Tennessee is collecting occupation (SOC) on a voluntary basis and exploring other enhancements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | ADVANCED |

### 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                                                                          | Tennessee integrates and publishes several key types of postsecondary education and training and employment datasets, including: (i) public four-year institutions to employment, (ii) private four-year institutions to employment, and (iii) community colleges to employment.<br><br>Integrated data are available as an open data file and public interactive reporting tool without disaggregation through the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's <a href="#">Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report</a> and the Tennessee Office of Evidence and Impact's (OEI) <a href="#">Education to Employment dashboard</a> . While the OEI dashboard does not feature disaggregated employment outcomes, it does disaggregate completion measures by race/ethnicity and gender. Tennessee does not integrate and publish data on WIOA-eligible training providers to employment. | ADVANCED |
| 4 Integrates and delivers information on learner's earnings and employment after high school completion and over time                                                                                                    | Tennessee has published reports for <a href="#">high school-to-employment outcomes</a> , without disaggregation by race/ethnicity, gender, and family income or economically disadvantaged status.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ADVANCED |
| 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 | Tennessee partners with PSEO (data pending), Multi-State Data Collaborative, and State Wage Interchange System.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | LEADING  |

### 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      | Tennessee has downloaded datasets from <a href="#">public interactive resources</a> containing aggregate education-to-opportunity statistics for its: (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) private four-year institutions; and (iii) community colleges.                                                                                              | LEADING  |
| 7 Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions | Tennessee has published an <a href="#">interactive resource</a> containing education-to-opportunity statistics for its: (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) private four-year institutions; (iii) community colleges; and (iv) college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials.                                                                     | LEADING  |
| 8 Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets                                                                               | Tennessee has individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets for third-party researcher access. For K-12, higher education, and labor research requests, Tennessee has a single application (with addenda for K-12 education) and access is provisioned through a secure portal. The request and approval process is not clearly documented. | ADVANCED |

### (...) 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                                                        | <p>The <a href="#">Tennessee Board of Regents</a> is pursuing CLR/LER efforts. The TN Comprehensive Learner Record Planning Group, supported by AACRAO, is focused on common transfer among Tennessee public institutions. This group has developed a recommended framework for the collection of high-impact student experiences and achievements tied to employability skills. The CLR will launch for the five highest enrolled programs at <a href="#">Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology</a> institutions and then expand to all programs. The state is discussing connections to employment data and Alabama's LER.</p> <p>The Tennessee and Kentucky Departments of Education are also beginning to explore how LERs can help to build, train, certify, and place qualified educators into teaching positions across both states.</p> | DEVELOPING |
| 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 | <a href="#">Tennessee's Data Analytics for Transparency and Accountability</a> (TN DATA), formerly TN P20 Connect, is a statewide initiative to improve state services and programs through data sharing and analytics. There's evidence of sustainable funding, dedicated staffing, as well as partnerships with higher education and workforce development agencies. TN DATA maintains ready access to integrated E2E data from which it has published interactive resources on postsecondary employment data. To date, the state has not produced reports or other tools on supply/demand labor market attributes. Additionally, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission has produced public-facing reports on talent supply and demand gaps and the alignment of higher education programs with workforce needs.                             | 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



# Quality Coaching

Tennessee

FOUR-YEAR

DEVELOPING

TWO-YEAR

DEVELOPING

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. |  | 37% DEVELOPING          | 33% FND./DEV.             |
| 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.         |  | 20% FOUNDATIONAL        | 38% DEVELOPING            |
| Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for student's strengths and interests                                                                                               |  | 24%                     | 41%                       |
| Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to                                                                                                                    |  | 25%                     | 38%                       |
| Potential earnings in different careers related to student's education program                                                                                                         |  | 18%                     | 39%                       |
| Career outcomes of students from their own institution                                                                                                                                 |  | 16%                     | 33%                       |
| 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.                                                   |  | 74% ADV./LEAD.          | 79% ADV./LEAD.            |
| Setting education and career goals and developing a plan to achieve these goals                                                                                                        |  | 73%                     | 77%                       |
| Identifying and overcoming barriers                                                                                                                                                    |  | 75%                     | 81%                       |
| CATEGORY KEY                                                                                                                                                                           |  |                         |                           |
| When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.                                                                                           |  |                         |                           |
| Leading<br>≥75%                                                                                                                                                                        |  | Advanced<br>50% to <75% | Developing<br>25% to <50% |
|                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |                         | Foundational<br><25%      |
| National results                                                                                                                                                                       |  | Four-year               | Two-year                  |
| Personalized guidance                                                                                                                                                                  |  | 34%                     | 45%                       |
| Timely labor market information                                                                                                                                                        |  | 21%                     | 33%                       |
| Support                                                                                                                                                                                |  | 71%                     | 74%                       |



# Affordability

Tennessee

FOUR-YEAR

DEVELOPING

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       | <div>FOUNDATIONAL</div> <div>34 hours per week</div> <div>Average annual net price,<br/>four-year institutions: \$14,559</div>                         | <div>LEADING</div> <div>8 hours per week</div> <div>Average annual net price,<br/>two-year institutions: \$6,547</div>                             |                                                              |                                                       |
| Low-income student hours<br>of work needed | <div>ADVANCED</div> <div>19 hours per week</div> <div>Average annual net price<br/>for low-income students,<br/>four-year institutions: \$10,120</div> | <div>LEADING</div> <div>6 hours per week</div> <div>Average annual net price<br/>for low-income students,<br/>two-year institutions: \$5,844</div> |                                                              |                                                       |
| CATEGORY KEY                               | <div><div></div>Leading</div> <div>&lt;10 hrs</div>                                                                                                    | <div><div></div>Advanced</div> <div>10 to &lt;20 hrs</div>                                                                                         | <div><div></div>Developing</div> <div>20 to &lt;30 hrs</div> | <div><div></div>Foundational</div> <div>≥30 hrs</div> |

| On-time completion rate |                                        | Four-year                                         |                                                     |                                                |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| On-time completion rate | DEVELOPING                             |                                                   |                                                     |                                                |
|                         | 38%                                    |                                                   |                                                     |                                                |
| CATEGORY KEY            | <div><div></div>Leading<br/>≥65%</div> | <div><div></div>Advanced<br/>50% to &lt;65%</div> | <div><div></div>Developing<br/>35% to &lt;50%</div> | <div><div></div>Foundational<br/>&lt;35%</div> |



# Work-Based Learning

Tennessee

FOUR-YEAR

DEVELOPING

TWO-YEAR

FOUNDATIONAL

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 | <b>38%</b> <b>DEVELOPING</b><br>Paid internship participation: 35%<br>Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid): 69% | <b>12%</b> <b>FOUNDATIONAL</b><br>Paid internship participation: 12%<br>Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid): 43% |

## 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 Tennessee, **0.33 percent** of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of **11,247 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

Tennessee

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

ADVANCED

Finance and accounting professionals

FOUNDATIONAL

Finance and accounting support

FOUNDATIONAL

Information and cybersecurity

ADVANCED

Software development and engineering

LEADING

### Health care

Health care technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

Nursing

FOUNDATIONAL

### Manufacturing and engineering

Engineering

DEVELOPING

Manufacturing/Trades technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

## CATEGORY KEY

● **Leading**  
≥75%

● **Advanced**  
60% to <75%

● **Developing**  
50% to <60%

● **Foundational**  
<50%