

NORTH DAKOTA ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE GRANT SUMMIT SUMMARY REPORT

North Dakota University System

January 11, 2018

Prepared By

The Consensus Council, Inc., Bismarck, ND

**North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit
Convened by
North Dakota University System**

Summary Report

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**North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit
Summary Report
January 11, 2018**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday, January 11, 2018, the North Dakota University System (NDUS) convened its first statewide summit to begin planning activities related to the North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant, a statewide effort to extend state supports to students, institutions, and the wider community to increase higher education graduation rates and to expand the awarding of high quality credentials and certificates. The Attainment Challenge Grant seeks to address the expressed need of businesses and industry to find and support a highly qualified workforce.

The Summit convened approximately 45 education, government, business, and community leaders to address three core elements of a possible state attainment initiative: marketing and communications, returning adults, and expanding credentials. Participants responded to three expert presentations, guided by a consensus-driven group process, and generated comments and recommendations, later compiled into this Summary Report. At the request of the NDUS, the Consensus Council, the Summit's facilitation agent, compiled the priority recommendations from among the Summit's three breakout consultation groups. The Consensus Council identified four over-arching themes that emerged from these compiled recommendations:

- (1) *Outreach and marketing to target audiences.* The state must identify and address barriers to adults succeeding in post-secondary education, the unique needs of non-traditional learners and subgroup populations, including economically disadvantaged individuals, and improving prior learning assessments. The state must increase the connections among K-12 and higher education to provide for complementary efforts to enhance attainment successes.
- (2) *Legislative assembly champion-building and funding.* The state legislature must become a primary champion of any state attainment initiative, articulate appropriate policies, and secure sufficient funding, including accessing the state's Legacy Fund, to ensure systemic success.
- (3) *Employer engagement.* The state must coordinate workforce planning and implementation efforts among state higher education institutions, businesses, and financial institutions, providing technical supports and financial incentives to small and large businesses and expanding workforce educational opportunities for all workers.
- (4) *Recognizing valued, high-quality certifications.* The state should identify valued, high-quality credentials and certificates, along with traditional credit-bearing college degrees, for inclusion within a comprehensive workforce readiness initiative, including clearly defined performance indicators of success and carefully managing public accountability reporting.

This Summary Report presents the process, comments, and recommendations generated by participants during the North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit.

North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit Summary Report January 11, 2018

Introduction

On Thursday, January 11, 2018, the North Dakota University System convened its first statewide summit to begin statewide planning activities related to the North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant. Supported by a planning grant awarded by the Lumina Foundation, the North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant focuses efforts on extending state supports to students, institutions, and the wider community to increase higher education graduation rates and to expand the awarding of high quality credentials and certificates to individuals, thereby addressing the expressed need of businesses and industry to find and support a highly qualified workforce.

The North Dakota University System identified and invited (Appendix A) prospective statewide stakeholders (Appendix B) to assess overall support for the advancement of any attainment initiative, as a first step in a longer-term planning effort required to accomplish such an endeavor. With technical assistance provided by the Lumina Foundation, the North Dakota University System reached out to national and state organizations with experience studying, designing, and administering high quality attainment initiatives in various settings nationwide. VoxGlobal Communications, the Workforce Data Quality Campaign, and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education provided their expertise in designing a program and planning framework to support the North Dakota University System's efforts to move this work forward. From these initial planning discussions, an agenda was developed (Appendix C), built around an interchange of expert presentations and engaging group discussions. To accomplish this aim, the North Dakota University System engaged the Consensus Council to structure and facilitate the Summit's group activities, including the recording and compilation of participants' contributions.

This North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit Summary Report, prepared by the Consensus Council, presents the resulting findings of the Attainment Summit, including the agenda, opening comments, summaries of the three expert presentations, and the collective participant comments from the discussion groups. These findings represent the first step in a longer process of discerning the appropriate direction, designing the essential initiatives, building the collaborative partnerships, and securing the critical resources required to establish a unique North Dakota attainment strategy.

Summit Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Kevin Melicher, North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE)
Dr. Mark Hagerott, Chancellor, North Dakota University System (NDUS)
Phil Wisecup, Interim Vice Chancellor of Strategy and Strategic Engagement, NDUS
Susan Heegaard, HCM Strategies and Lumina Foundation State Advisor

Participants were welcomed to the event by Dr. Kevin Melicher, NDSBHE; Dr. Mark Hagerott, Chancellor, NDUS; Phil Wisecup, Interim Vice Chancellor of Strategy and Strategic Engagement, NDUS; and Susan Heegaard, HCM Strategies and Lumina Foundation State Advisor.

Dr. Melicher thanked participants for attending and noted the importance of partners in the effort to increase attainment in North Dakota from 60% to 65% by 2025, including employers and businesses, K – 12, Career and Technical Education (CTE), community colleges, tribal colleges and universities. He stated that the NDSBHE adopted the 65% goal in September 2016 as part of the overall Strategic Plan. This Summit is the next step in engaging adult learners in the task of meeting the state’s workforce needs into the future, through higher education and meaningful certificate programs.

Chancellor Hagerott thanked the Lumina Foundation for the fiscal support of the Summit, noting that the Foundation has been out ahead of this issue for some time, helping numerous states to achieve ambitious attainment goals.

Ms. Heegaard spoke of her personal connection to North Dakota, and her prior work for the Bush Foundation and the Minnesota Higher Education Commission. She stated that the sole focus of the Lumina Foundation’s work and resources is attainment. Ultimately, successful achievement of attainment goals will assure a steady, strong workforce through both prosperous and lean times.

Mr. Wisecup shared the goals for the meeting and walked through the specifics of the agenda with the participants. He thanked the Consensus Council for the facilitation and documentation assistance with the planned breakout group discussions.

Session I: Marketing and Communications

Marketing and Communications: How to Engage North Dakotans and Market the Case for Improved Attainment, Jonathan Coffin and Michael Marker, VoxGlobal Communications

Jonathan Coffin and Michael Marker, VoxGlobal Communication, presented how North Dakota might design and market a coherent communications campaign to advance the state’s attainment goals. The presentation considered (a) various national attainment efforts to define and communicate attainment goals to the public, (b) core message framework components, (c) special considerations for audiences and messengers, and (d) the development of a message tool kit. A summary of this presentation is accessible at the following link: [Presentation](#).

Following the completion of the large group presentation, Greg Gallagher, Consensus Council consultant, provided instructions to participants regarding the process to be used to compile comments and recommendations from the participants, for use by the NDUS, to enhance the state’s attainment initiatives development. Participants were divided into three pre-assigned breakout groups (Appendix D) each with an appointed facilitator from the Consensus Council assuming responsibility for leading each group, recording participant comments, and compiling a final summary of comments and recommendations for the NDUS. The three group facilitators included Rose Stoller, Executive Director; Scott Fry, Senior Program Director; and Greg Gallagher, Contract Consultant. Participants reviewed the consensus building process ground rules (Appendix E) that applied to all group discussions and proceeded to conduct their small group discussions.

Session I group activity recorded participants’ observations and recommendations, based on the Session I assembly presentation content, on four general prompted Activities.

1. Each group conducts a hybrid SWOT Analysis, specifically capturing the following:
 - 1.1. Identify the state's STRENGTHS in supporting any attainment initiatives.
 - 1.2. Identify any TRENDS and CHALLENGES that may impact any attainment initiatives.
 - 1.3. Identify any OPPORTUNITIES that may advance any attainment initiatives.
2. Each group identifies prospective AUDIENCES and MESSENGERS critical to the implementation of any attainment initiatives, including influencers (e.g., policymakers) and consumers (e.g., returning older than average students).
3. PRIORITIES. Each group votes to identify top priority issues from Activity 1 (SWOT Analysis) and Activity 2 (Audience and Messengers) above.
4. SALES PITCH. Each group develops a short statement that presents and sells the need for a state attainment initiative.

Session I transcribed composite comments, compiled from among all three groups, are presented in Appendix F.

Session II: Returning Adults

Returning Adults: Indiana's "You Can. Go Back." Initiative, Zach Smith, Legislative and Program Manager, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Zach Smith, Legislative and Program Manager, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, presented the organizational framework and history of the "You Can. Go Back." attainment initiative, administered by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. Mr. Smith provided background information for how North Dakota might design and administer its own unique attainment initiative, based on the state's collective assets. The presentation reviewed (a) Indiana's Adult Engagement Campaigns; (b) establishing a foundation of action, based on a clear understanding of needs; (c) directing outreach and marketing solutions; (d) considering adult student grant options; and (e) actively engaging partners. A summary of this presentation is accessible at the following link: [Presentation](#).

Following the large group presentation, the three breakout groups reconvened to conduct four separate activities. Session II group activity recorded participants' observations and recommendations, based on the Session II assembly presentation content, on four general prompted Activities.

1. RESOURCES and INCENTIVES. How might the state use existing resources/opportunities or new incentives to engage adults in furthering their education?
2. STUDENT and EMPLOYER OUTREACH. How might the state reach out to former students or current employers and promote resources, flexibility, and support to help them attain their goals?

3. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS and CHAMPIONS. What is needed to promote community buy-in and ownership through local partnerships? Who would be best to champion this effort statewide?
4. PRIORITIES. Each group votes to identify top priority issues from Activity 1 (Resources and Incentives) and Activity 2 (Student and Employer Outreach) above.

Session II transcribed composite comments, compiled from among all three groups, are presented in Appendix G.

Session III: Expanding Credentials

Expanding Credentials to Include High Quality Certificates, Jenna Leventoff and Bryan Wilson, Workforce Data Quality Campaign

Jenna Leventoff and Bryan Wilson, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, presented the rationale for recognizing and expanding credentials, including high quality certificates, beyond traditional degree programs for inclusion in any statewide attainment initiative. Ms. Leventoff and Mr. Wilson presented tangible steps required to establish and administer a high-quality certification system that allows for transparent accountability, based on the collection and reporting of reliable outcomes data. The presentation reviewed (a) making the case for high-quality credentials; (b) identifying the basic types of credentials; (c) defining meaningful performance indicators based on good data; and (d) defining valued credentials. A summary of this presentation is accessible at the following link: [Presentation](#).

Following the completion of the large group presentation, Consensus Council staff facilitated a discussion among the assembled participants to assess participants' comfort and agreement with the technical contents of the presentation, specifically focusing on three matters:

1. INCLUSION OF NON-DEGREE CREDENTIALS. Confirm the importance of including high quality, non-degree credentials in any state attainment initiative.
2. PROCESS STEPS. Confirm that the process steps for establishing a reliable accountability system, including data management and reporting, proposed in the presentation fit the state's expectations.
3. STAKEHOLDERS. Confirm that the various partnerships and message champions identified in earlier discussions appropriately apply to the issue of expanding credentials.

Participants provided the following observations:

- Participants expressed general agreement that any state attainment initiative should include high quality, non-degree credentials or certification in its overall design.
- Participants expressed general agreement that the state should design a data management and accountability reporting system that integrates traditional credit-bearing college credits with high quality, non-degree credentials or certification,

respecting the uniqueness of each component yet ensuring a comprehensive presentation of unified performance indicators and overall achievement.

- Participants expressed general comfort and agreement with the design and administrative steps proposed by the Workforce Data Quality Campaign in establishing a state framework for an attainment initiative. Participants supported the state adapting administrative protocols to achieve an appropriate state model of attainment programming.
- Participants expressed the need to clearly define the meaning of attainment itself, the scope of attainment goals, the design of program components, the breadth of statewide stakeholder engagement, the design of reliable performance indicators, and careful management of data collection and reporting.
- Participants expressed gratitude to the NDUS for convening the assembled statewide gathering of stakeholders and encouraged the NDUS to access a broader diversity of interest groups as additional attainment system design efforts move forward. Participants supported the inclusion of the various stakeholder groups recommended in the day's breakout sessions.

Closing Comments

Consensus Council staff presented high-level priority summaries from each of the three breakout groups. These priority summary activities and their vote tallies are presented in Appendices F and G, under Priorities.

Chancellor Hagerott thanked the participants for their engagement and contributions throughout the day's proceedings. He stated that any future attainment initiative activity would require a notable collaboration of multiple agencies and groups, including an expanded effort to increase the diversity of subgroup interests. He stated that the NDUS would review the Summit's final summary report and determine next steps based on the participant's recommendations and the goals set forth in the state's attainment grant, supported by the Lumina Foundation.

Phil Wisecup thanked the Summit participants, the expert presenters, the Consensus Council, and the Lumina Foundation for their collective contributions supporting the development of a state attainment initiative. Mr. Wisecup adjourned the Summit proceedings.

Compiled Recommendations

Following the completion of the Summit, the Consensus Council, at the request of the NDUS, compiled priority composite recommendations from among the Summit's three breakout consultation groups. The Consensus Council grouped complementary comments, reviewed summative group votes, and composed four over-arching themes that emerged from these compiled recommendations:

- (1) *Outreach and marketing to target audiences.* The state must identify and address barriers to adults succeeding in post-secondary education, the unique needs of non-traditional learners and subgroup populations, including economically disadvantaged individuals, and improving prior learning assessments. The state must increase the

connections among K-12 and higher education to provide for complementary efforts to enhance attainment successes.

- (2) *Legislative assembly champion-building and funding.* The state legislature must become a primary champion of any state attainment initiative, articulate appropriate policies, and secure sufficient funding, including accessing the state's Legacy Fund, to ensure systemic success.
- (3) *Employer engagement.* The state must coordinate workforce planning and implementation efforts among state higher education institutions, businesses, and financial institutions, providing technical supports and financial incentives to small and large businesses and expanding workforce educational opportunities for all workers.
- (4) *Recognizing valued, high-quality certifications.* The state should identify valued, high-quality credentials and certificates, along with traditional credit-bearing college degrees, for inclusion within a comprehensive workforce readiness initiative, including clearly defined performance indicators of success and carefully managing public accountability reporting.

The Consensus Council submitted these recommendations to the NDUS, providing a basis for designing the next phases of planning and executing a successful state Attainment Initiative.

Appendix A: Letter of Invitation to Participants

Chancellor Mark Hagerott would like to invite you to attend our first LUMINA attainment challenge grant event which is scheduled to occur Thursday, January 11, 2018 here in Bismarck, North Dakota. As you know, Lumina launched its Attainment Challenge Grant program last fall and committed to support states with up to \$100,000 for developing and implementing evidence-based policies to improve student success, close equity gaps, help underserved minorities and assist their states to reach a robust postsecondary attainment goal. The development of high-quality action plans made North Dakota eligible for challenge grant funding along with Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Vermont.

This is our first opportunity to discuss this with you, the stakeholders, to help the University System determine how to reach the State Board of Higher Education's stated goal of 65% postsecondary attainment for the state of North Dakota, by 2025. We have speakers from the State of Indiana – from the Commission of Higher Education and from a leading Marketing and Communication Firm VOXGLOBAL in Indianapolis, who will talk with us about their campaign (YOU CAN. COME BACK) which is already well underway with a goal of achieving 60% postsecondary attainment. We also have speakers coming from the Workforce Quality Data Campaign to address the issue of expanding credentials to include high quality certificates. Following each of the speakers we will have brief working group discussions to figure out how the speakers' messages can apply to us here in North Dakota. This is an opportunity to talk about these important issues and help shape the message to the citizens of North Dakota.

We have reserved a block of hotel rooms nearby under ND Attainment Grant Challenge Summit at the Hampton Inn, 2020 Schaefer St. Bismarck ND 58501 701-751-5656 for January 10, 2018. There are 20 rooms set aside at \$83.70 a night (plus tax) with the deadline for reservations January 2, 2018.

Come join us at Bismarck State College Thursday, January 11, 2018 at 8:30 a.m. To RSVP, please complete the [invitation link here](#).

We hope to see you soon!

Sent on behalf of
Phil Wisecup
Interim Vice Chancellor of Strategy and
Strategic Engagement
**NORTH DAKOTA
University System**

Appendix B: Attainment Challenge Grant Summit Invitees List

Lisa	Azure	United Tribes Technical College	Vice President of Academic Affairs
Kirsten	Baesler	North Department of Public Instruction	State Superintendent
Dean	Bresciani	North Dakota State University	President
Larry	Brooks	Dakota College at Bottineau	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Doug	Darling	Lake Region State College	President
Lorraine	Davis	Native American Development Center	Founder/Executive Director
Tammy	Dolan	North Dakota University System	Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs
Kaleb	Dschaak	North Dakota Student Association	President
Barry	Dutton	U.S. Department of Labor	State Director, Apprenticeship
Christopher	Erickson	North Dakota University System	
Scott	Fry	Consensus Council	Senior Program Director
Greg	Gallagher	Consensus Council	Consultant
Shirley	Glass	Bank of North Dakota	Education Market Manager
Susan	Gunsch	Job Service ND	Director
Mark	Hagerott	North Dakota University System	Chancellor
Kevin	Iverson	ND Dept. of Commerce	Census Office Manager
Ryan	Jockers	North Dakota University System	Strategic Analytics Coordinator
Maren Allison	Johnson	Mayville State University	Director for Institutional Effectiveness
Kathy	Johnson	MHA Nation	Education Outreach and Development
Josh	Kramer	North Dakota Association of RECs	General Manager
Wayne	Kutzer	ND Department of CTE	Director
Dan	Leingang	Bismarck State College	Vice President for Academic Affairs
Cynthia	Lindquist	Cankdeska Cikana Community College	President
Billie Jo	Lorius	ND University System	Communications Director
Sheridan	McNeil	United Tribes Technical College	Career & Technical Education Director
Kevin	Melicher	State Board of Higher Education	
Terry	Meyer	North Dakota University System	Chancellor's Executive Assistant
John	Miller	Williston State College	President
Thomas	Mitzel	Dickinson State University	President
Alan	Peterson	ND Center for Distance Education	State Director
Mike	Seminary	Bismarck	Mayor
Steve	Shirley	Minot State University	President
Wayde	Sick	ND Dept. of Commerce	Director of Workforce
Larry	Skogen	Bismarck State College	President
Zac	Smith	NDAREC	General Counsel
Pete	Smithhisler	Valley City State University	VPSA
Karel	Sovak	University of Mary	Associate Professor
Keith	Stenehjem	Mayville State University	VPAA
Rose	Stoller	Consensus Council	Executive Director
Debbie	Storrs	University of North Dakota	Senior Vice Provost

Tamara	Uselman	Bismarck Public Schools	Superintendent
Laurel	Vermillion	Sitting Bull College	President
Jennifer	Weber	North Dakota University System	Director of Institutional Research
James	Wisecup	North Dakota University System	Interim VC for Strategy
Margie	Zalk		
	Enerson	Engage To Inspire Marketing	Marketing Consultant

Appendix C: Summit Agenda

North Dakota Attainment Challenge Grant Summit
Thursday January 11, 2018
Bismarck State College
Bavendick Stateroom

Agenda

- 8:30 Welcome and Introductions:
Dr. Kevin Melicher, Member, State Board of Higher Education
Mark Hagerott, Chancellor, North Dakota State University System
- 8:45 North Dakota's Attainment Challenge Grant, Background and Objectives for the day
Phil Wisecup, Interim Vice Chancellor, North Dakota State University System
- 8:55 Lumina Foundation Strategy Labs and North Dakota's Attainment Goal
Susan Heegaard, HCM Strategists and Lumina State Advisor
- Three Strategies to Move Attainment Forward in North Dakota**
- 9:05 Marketing and Communications - How to Engage North Dakotans and Market the Case for Improved Attainment
Michael Marker and Jonathan Coffin, VoxGlobal Communications
- 9:50 Breakout Sessions, Marketing and Communications Proposals: Groups 1-3
North Dakota Consensus Council, facilitation
- 10:35 Break
- 10:45 Returning Adults - Indiana's "You Can. Go Back" Initiative,
Zach Smith, Legislative and Program Manager, Indiana Commission for Higher Education
- 11:30 Breakout Sessions, Returning Adults Proposals: Groups 1-3
North Dakota Consensus Council, facilitation
- 12:15 Lunch (30 min)
- 12:45 Expanding Credentials to Include High Quality Certificates
Bryan Wilson and Jenna Leventoff, Workforce Data Quality Campaign
- 1:30 Breakout Sessions, Expanding Credentials Proposals: Groups 1-3
North Dakota Consensus Council, facilitation
- 2:15 Break
- 2:25 Report-Out from the Three Breakout Sessions
North Dakota Consensus Council
Moving attainment forward in North Dakota: Top 3 ideas from each group
- 3:00 Final Comments and Next Steps
Dr. Kevin Melicher and Phil Wisecup
- 3:30 Adjournment

Appendix D: Discussion Group Assignments

Group 1

Rose Stoller, Facilitator, Consensus Council
Lisa Azure, Vice President of Academic Affairs, United Tribes Technical College
Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
Tammy Dolan, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs/Chief Financial Officer,
North Dakota University System
Kaleb Dschaak, President, North Dakota Student Association
Susan Gunsch, Director, Job Service North Dakota
Mark Hagerott, Chancellor, North Dakota University System
Kevin Iverson, Census Office Manager, North Dakota Department of Commerce
Maren Allison Johnson, Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness,
Mayville State University
Dan Leingang, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Bismarck State College
Billie Jo Lorius, Communications Director, North Dakota University System
Steve Shirley, President, Minot State University
Wayde Sick, Director of Workforce, North Dakota Department of Commerce
Zac Smith, General Counsel,
North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives
Keith Stenehjem, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Mayville State University

Group 2

Scott Fry, Facilitator, Consensus Council
Dean Bresciani, President, North Dakota State University
Shirley Glass, Education Market Manager, Bank of North Dakota
Kathy Johnson, Education Outreach and Development, MHA Nation
Josh Kramer, General Manager,
North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives
Wayne Kutzer, Director, North Dakota Department of Career & Technical Education
Sheridan McNeil, Career & Technical Education Director, United Tribes Technical
College
Terry Meyer, Chancellor's Executive Assistant, North Dakota University System
Thomas Mitzel, President, Dickinson State University
Alan Peterson, State Director, North Dakota Center for Distance Education
Larry Skogen, President, Bismarck State College
Laurel Vermillion, President, Sitting Bull College
Tamara Uselman, Superintendent, Bismarck Public Schools
Jennifer Weber, Director of Institutional Research, North Dakota University System
Margie Zalk Enerson, Marketing Consultant, Engage To Inspire Marketing

Group 3

Greg Gallagher, Consultant, Consensus Council
Larry Brooks, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs,
Dakota College at Bottineau
Doug Darling, President, Lake Region State College
Christopher Erickson, North Dakota University System
Lorraine Davis, Founder & Executive Director, Native American Development Center
Barry Dutton, State Director, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship
Ryan Jockers, Strategic Analytics Coordinator, North Dakota University System
Cynthia Lindquist, President, Cankdeska Cikana Community College
Kevin Melicher, State Board of Higher Education
John Miller, President, Williston State College
Mike Seminary, Mayor, City of Bismarck
Larry Smithhisler, Vice President of Student Affairs, Valley City State University
Karol Sovak, Associate Professor, University of Mary
Debbie Storrs, Senior Vice Provost, University of North Dakota
James Wisecup, Interim Vice Chancellor for Strategy, North Dakota University System

Appendix E: Consensus Building Process Ground Rules

1. This is your show!
2. Everyone is equal.
3. No relevant topic is excluded.
4. No discussion is ended.
5. Respect all opinions.
6. Respect the time.
7. Silence is agreement.
8. Respect non-attribution.
9. Keep the facilitator accurate.
10. Have fun!

Appendix F: Session I Composite Group Comments

Session I group activity recorded participants' observations and recommendations, based on the Session I assembly presentation content, on four general prompted Activities.

1. Each group conducts a hybrid SWOT Analysis, specifically capturing the following:
 - 1.1. Identify the state's STRENGTHS in supporting any attainment initiatives.
 - 1.2. Identify any TRENDS and CHALLENGES that may impact any attainment initiatives.
 - 1.3. Identify any OPPORTUNITIES that may advance any attainment initiatives.
2. Each group identifies prospective AUDIENCES and MESSENGERS critical to the implementation of any attainment initiatives, including influencers (e.g., policymakers) and consumers (e.g., returning older than average students).
3. PRIORITIES. Each group votes to identify top priority issues from Activity 1 (SWOT Analysis) and Activity 2 (Audiences and Messengers) above.
4. SALES PITCH. Each group develops a short statement that presents and sells the need for a state attainment initiative.

1.1 Strengths

Group Prompt: *Identify the state's STRENGTHS in supporting any attainment initiatives.*

Group 1 Responses

- The education system has a large footprint in North Dakota.
- ND has a high graduation rate from high school.
- We have strong broadband.
- The ND University System is transfer friendly.
- Tribal Colleges are a benefit to ND – articulation agreements are in place – United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) receives state funding for non-tribal students.
- The network of partner colleges and tribal colleges is sound.
- Strong dual-credit system.
- We have a collaborative spirit.
- We have supportive Legislators.
- The Governor has a high interest in education.
- There is a strong work ethic in ND.
- We have strong social and support networks.
- We have the Bank of ND.

Group 2 Responses

- North Dakota already has a high level of attainment.
- High level of commitment to education in North Dakota.
- Strategic distribution of educational institutions and high level of access to online tools.
- Access to broadband around the state.
- Because of population size there is a close connection to the higher education system.
- Cost of higher education in North Dakota is less than the rest of the US.
- Diversity of campuses means there is a place for just about everyone.
- 5 Tribal Colleges meeting Native American educational needs.
- The Bank of North Dakota increases level of college prep, savings, loan program.
- Good emphasis on workforce development and not just through degree programs.
- Ease of networking between individuals and institutions.
- There is some streamlining between schools.

Group 3 Responses

- The state supports a significant variety of higher education institutions which offer a variety of academic degrees and technical credentials. (1 vote)
- The state has an extensive network of broad band technology to support statewide access to educational offerings. (1 vote)
- The state has a small population which can directly influence the development of programs and access widely distributed higher education institutions.
- The state evidences strong relationships among businesses, government, and educational institutions. (2 Votes)
- The state's citizens have ready access to local and state policymakers, influencing the direction and scope of services.
- The state's institutions of higher education demonstrate a strong, collaborative spirit.
- The state and local communities evidence a depth of proven communicators who support higher education efforts.

1.2 Trends and Challenges

Group Prompt: *Identify any TRENDS and CHALLENGES that may impact any attainment initiatives.*

Group 1 Responses

- We need to know where employers are at on this issue – will they support employees returning to school?
- Need to identify and develop mentors, businesses and potential placements.
- ND has many small businesses who might not see the return on investment of an absent staff/worker while they return to school – need to be flexible.
- Business/private sector generally says that higher education can't move fast enough.
- ND presently has 12,000 unfilled jobs.
- There are key worker shortage areas including teachers and registered nurses.

- Students are more mobile than ever and there's an increase in part-time students.
- A higher number of students are balancing education, employment and caregiving (children or an aging parent).
- ND has a younger age profile than it once had.
- Graduation rates will grow over time.
- Significant remedial work is common for first year ND college students.
- The impacts, positive and negative, of social media.
- Increasing numbers of people with associates degrees and higher degrees.
- Bachelors level graduate numbers remain flat.
- The transfer system/process needs work – we can improve our ability to accept prior coursework, lived experience, to advance students.
- We should explore what the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) can or can't do to help advance attainment goals.
- Career & Technical Ed (CTE) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will play a role in this work – need to define that, harmonize where possible.
- There's a decline of Native American student enrollees in state colleges and universities (due, somewhat, to the UND team name issue).
- Other minorities, combined, exceed the number of Native Americans enrolled in ND colleges.
- More Native American students are choosing to live off-reservation after completing college.

Group 2 Responses

- Need to address the cyclical patterns of generational poverty and its long-term impact.
- Need to address the trend of underemployment in North Dakota.
- Existence of high wage jobs without the need of higher education – i.e. Oil Field jobs.
- Tension between the level of support between the high level of public support for higher education institutions and the low level of support among policy and budget decision-makers.
- High level of public support for the high number of post-secondary educational institutions.
- Low level of legislator support for the high number of post-secondary educational institutions.
- The increased cost of reaching adult learners.
- The increased level of supports necessary for adult learners, such as childcare.
- Difficulty in convincing potential students of their own worth, ability, and capacity to succeed in post-secondary education - different approaches will be necessary to address the specific needs within specific population demographics, such as those living in generational poverty.
- Lack of cultural competency within post-secondary institutions.
- Lack of academic readiness within student population.
- Lack of access to broadband because of cost.
- Difficulty and high cost of maintaining and elevating the messaging about post-secondary education.
- Ownership of messaging.
- Sustaining \$ for the consistent messaging.
- Collaborating between post-secondary institutions.

- Lack of K-12 teachers.
- No, or poor, preparation coming out of K-12 system because of problems that are out of the K-12 systems' control.
- Transportation to Post-Secondary Institutions and overall distance in some instances.
- Low rate of high school completion among Native Americans.
- Lack of housing for students.
- General lack of funding for the post-secondary system.
- Student difficulty transitioning between 2-year and 4-year institutions.
- The disparity of access to postsecondary institutions between rural and urban populations.

Group 3 Responses

- Technology growing continuously and becoming more accessible. (1 vote)
- Competition is increasing among higher education institutions.
- Competition is increasing steadily for a limited workforce.
- There is an increasing awareness of the need for some form of attainment initiative.
- Attainment is not clearly understood or even defined.
- State and local funding of programs and services is currently limited and stressed. (1 vote)
- The professional development of educators at all levels is an ongoing challenge.
- The public perception of higher education is changing, including many who question its purpose, structure, and worth in a changing world.
- Many people are questioning what level of higher education is appropriate for them in a complex economy.
- There exists an “Us-Versus-Them” dynamic in people's experience of accessing and benefiting from higher education.
- Quality matters when it comes to providing and receiving meaningful education services. Attend first to quality. (2 votes)

1.3 Opportunities

Group Prompt: *Identify any OPPORTUNITIES that may advance any attainment initiatives.*

Group 1 Responses

1. Outreach to non-traditional audiences. (6 votes)
2. Identification of “certificates of value”. (4 votes)
3. Increasing connections from K – 12 to higher education. (4 votes)
4. Increase Tribal College graduation rates. (2 votes)
5. Engage, convince parents and the public of the value of higher education, including trades. (2 votes)
6. Engage employers in the attainment efforts. (1 vote)
7. Address the impacts of social media. (1 vote)

Group 2 Responses

- Increase the number of people living in poverty accessing higher education.
- New populations in the state with new needs.
- National interest in North Dakota because of ease and speed to scale projects.
- AVID program has been a game changer for kids from chronic poverty in K-12 and is now available in college settings.
- Streamlining transfers between 2-year colleges to 4-year universities.
- Communication progress in streamlining.
- Increase the number and quality of Public/Private partnerships specifically educational institutions and specific industries, like NDSU's arrangement with Microsoft.
- Continue to improve the cooperation and relationships between institutions for students' benefit.
- Increase communications to the public about services without overwhelming.
- Increase communication, collaboration, and cooperation between educational systems from early childhood through higher education.
- Increase general level of resourcefulness and collaboration among higher education institutions and certification institutions.
- Increase capacity of workforce development programs.
- Increase outreach to adults, upscaling their education.
- Figure out how to tie K-12 in messaging about the importance of collaboration between school systems.
- Embrace and reach out to resources about student diversity. Help institutions determine what student diversity means and how to support an increasingly diverse population of students.
- Learn how to measure and use data for determining success of projects, work, and cultural awareness.
- Increasing the organization of messaging among higher education institutions is an important opportunity for people in North Dakota.
- Increase level of collaborative work with workforce demand and educational system (K-12 -> Higher Ed Institutions) about current and developing job opportunities.
- Increase the quality of career planning with students at secondary and higher education.
- Increase coordination about job opportunities and education between higher education and K-12.
- Flip mindset to give back to communities by becoming educators and target rural areas in this effort.
- Increase the awareness of apprenticeship programs.
- Increase the reach of K-12 REA's and other cooperative models that currently work to teach skills.

Group 3 Responses

- The small size of our population and people's ready access to higher education institutions favors the state's potential for success.
- Higher education has a long history of cooperative relationships with business.
- Businesses express a clear need for quality employees.

- There exists a clear need to disrupt the status quo and to increase Innovative educational practices. (4 votes)
- Businesses and the public are looking to broaden their local and regional economy, (1 vote)
- There exists a clear need to develop and apply better assessments of students and workers needs and skills. (4 votes)
- Education institutions need to pivot toward competency-based education.
- It is difficult to plan when future workforce needs are changing and uncertain.
- There is a need to better align liberal arts education to meet the needs of the economy. (3 votes)
- Education programs at all levels need to teach the essential soft-skills required in the work place.
- Any attainment initiative needs to emphasize system-driven planning and flexibility.
- A limited population base increases the likelihood of stiffer competition among education providers and an inefficient duplication of effort. (1 vote)
- It is essential for the state to capitalize on the timeliness of emergent events and to engage all parties on a common goal. (1 vote)

2.0 Audiences and Messengers

Group Prompt: Identify prospective AUDIENCES and MESSENGERS critical to the implementation of any attainment initiatives, including influencers (e.g., policymakers) and consumers (e.g., returning older than average students).

Group 1 Responses

- Tribal Colleges and their students.
- National Guard, military.
- Non-traditional audiences.
- Out-of-state job seekers.
- Parents.
- Alumni.
- Students who are under-prepared for the next step.
- English Language Learners (ELL).
- Students who transfer from a Community College to a 4-year University.
- Employers.
- Policymakers.
- People in poverty, people of low and moderate income.

Group 2 Responses

Group 2 elected to bypass discussion on Audiences and Messengers to focus greater attention on the other exercises.

Group 3 Responses

- Ask consumers what they want. (2 votes)
- Open a structured dialogue between employers and employees. (1 vote)

- Establish an outreach effort to working adults. (1 vote)
- Refer to data gathered from past group retraining efforts.
- Defining Attainment will define the audience. (2 votes)
- Focus on innovative messaging to all subgroup populations. (4 votes)
- Parents.
- Students.
- Attend to learning style differences among adults to better connect with them on the need for continuous education.

3.0 Priorities

Group Prompt: *Each participant votes to identify top priority issues from Activity 1 (SWOT Analysis) and Activity 2 (Audiences and Messengers) above. Votes are tabulated for each group.*

Group 1 Responses

- Outreach to non-traditional audiences. (6 votes)
- Identification of “certificates of value.” (4 votes)
- Increasing connections from K – 12 to higher education. (4 votes)
- Increase Tribal College graduation rates. (2 votes)
- Engage, convince parents and the public of the value of higher education, including trades. (2 votes)
- Engage employers in the attainment efforts. (1 votes)
- Address the impacts of social media. (1 votes)

During discussion, Group 1 identified certain recurring themes:

- This will require a significant paradigm shift for several systems and many individuals.
- We will need involvement of and buy-in from employers.

Group 2 Responses

- Challenge of addressing the cyclical patterns of generational poverty and the long-term impacts of poverty. (5 votes)
- Addressing the tension between the public’s high level of support of the post-secondary system and policy decision-makers (Legislature) low level of support for the same system. (5 votes)
- The difficulty in convincing potential students, especially those coming from backgrounds of poverty, of their worth, ability, and capacity to succeed in post-secondary education. (5 votes)
- The opportunity to better coordinate between workforce planning and the post-secondary educational system. (5 votes)
- The need for better career planning with students at secondary and post-secondary institutions. (2 votes)
- Learning how to better measure and use data for determining success of projects, general work, and cultural awareness at the post-secondary level. (2 votes)
- Need to address the lack of cultural competency within post-secondary institutions. (1 vote)

- The disparity of access to post-secondary institutions between rural and urban populations. (1 vote)
- The opportunity to reach adults looking to upscale their education. (1 vote)
- Focus on the lower cost of North Dakota's post-secondary education compared to the rest of the country. (1 vote)

Group 3 Responses

- Focus on innovative messaging to all subgroup populations. (4 votes)
- There exists a clear need to disrupt the status quo and to increase Innovative educational practices. (4 votes)
- There exists a clear need to develop and apply better assessments of students and workers needs and skills. (4 votes)
- There is a need to better align liberal arts education to meet the needs of the economy. (3 votes)
- Ask consumers what they want. (2 votes)
- Defining Attainment will define the audience. (2 votes)
- The state evidences strong relationships among businesses, government, and educational institutions. (2 Votes)
- Quality matters when it comes to providing and receiving meaningful education services. Attend first to quality. (2 votes)
- The state supports a significant variety of higher education institutions which offer a variety of academic degrees and technical credentials. (1 vote)
- The state has an extensive network of broad band technology to support statewide access to educational offerings. (1 vote)
- Technology growing continuously and becoming more accessible. (1 vote)
- State and local funding of programs and services is currently limited and stressed. (1 vote)
- Businesses and the public are looking to broaden their local and regional economy. (1 vote)
- A limited population base increases the likelihood of stiffer competition among education providers and an inefficient duplication of effort. (1 vote)
- It is essential for the state to capitalize on the timeliness of emergent events and to engage all parties on a common goal. (1 vote)
- Open a structured dialogue between employers and employees. (1 vote)
- Establish an outreach effort to working adults. (1 vote)

4.0 Sales Pitch

Group Prompts: *Group develops a short statement that presents and sells the need for a state attainment initiative.*

Group 3 prepared a framework response to the group prompt, listing a collection of prospective terms that might serve the role of subjects, verbs, and objects within a sentence. Rather than draft a single sentence, within the limited time available, Group 3 elected to list the building blocks of multiple prospective sentences. The following is the itemized list of sentence building components.

- Subject terms:
 1. Have you thought about....
 2. Quality education....
 3. Environment....
 4. Are you....
 5. Skills....

- Verb terms:
 1. Passion
 2. Available
 3. Improve
 4. Opportunity
 5. Help you identify

- Object
 1. Value
 2. To You
 3. Life changes
 4. Goals
 5. Want
 6. Earnings
 7. Opportunities
 8. Economic Stability
 9. Appropriate Future
 10. Happy
 11. Satisfied
 12. Skills

Appendix G: Session II Composite Group Comments

Session II group activity recorded participants' observations and recommendations, based on the Session II assembly presentation content, on four general prompted Activities.

1. **RESOURCES and INCENTIVES.** How might the state use existing resources/opportunities or new incentives to engage adults in furthering their education?
2. **STUDENT and EMPLOYER OUTREACH.** How might the state reach out to former students or current employers and promote resources, flexibility, and support to help them attain their goals?
3. **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS and CHAMPIONS.** What is needed to promote community buy-in and ownership through local partnerships? Who would be best to champion this effort statewide?
4. **PRIORITIES.** Each group votes to identify top priority issues from Activity 1 (Resources and Incentives) and Activity 2 (Student and Employer Outreach) above.

1.0 Resources and Incentives

Group 1 Responses

- Address distance, remoteness as a barrier.
- Advance emerging technologies and the high value certifications.
- Explore the activity of the Valley Prosperity Partnership to determine common interest, goals.
- Become a strong partner with the Governors Main Street Initiative.
- Identify what certificates are needed, and where. Match the need with the right program, college.
- Look for different, diversified ways to establish, legislate and fund scholarship opportunities.
- Focus on high skill jobs.
- Help students “learn to learn” through college prep, tutoring, study skills, etc.
- Identify and address barriers to adults returning to school.
- Improve opportunities for financial resources for students and/or more loan forgiveness.
- Work toward paying living wages.

Group 2 Responses

- Great variety in programs around the state.
- Need to revamp the state educational grant program, it is currently a disincentive.
- Ability to access the post-secondary system, but people don't always know about it.
- Need to target specific audiences.

- Federal funds - but all are poverty based.
- Need to figure out how to capitalize on funding for adult students above the poverty line, but without the ability to pay for upscaling their education themselves.
- Provide North Dakota money for scholars for Non-Traditional Students (i.e. over 25 years old).
- Increase the number of employer based scholarships.
- Reduce the financial barriers for distance learning.
- Grant credits for work experience.
- Retool funding to pay for prior learning assessment fees.
- Provide a clearing house of information and resources to help increase graduate diversity to decrease economic hills and valleys in the state.

Group 3 Responses

- Advance the use of 529 Plans to support the effort.
- Find various ways to support individuals' refinancing of debt to allow their participation.
- Access the full use of Bank of ND resources and services. (1 vote)
- Seek legislative appropriations to institutionalize this effort. (1 vote)
- Reach out to University Foundations to discuss possible support for this work.
- Support the use of employer tax credits to deepen business incentives to support workers' ongoing education.
- Reach out to businesses to solicit business grants to support their workers' ongoing education.
- Explore ways to expand State-Private matched contributions.
- Establish program supports for employees without employer support.
- Explore the establishment of an Attainment Endowment.
- Seek legislative approval to access the state's Legacy Fund to support statewide attainment initiative efforts. (4 votes)

2.0 Student and Employer Outreach

Group 1 Responses

- Tourism, noting controversy about school start and end dates.
- Explore Mississippi "Compete to Complete" initiative.
- Target the population of people who have some college.
- Focus on getting students in the door first.
- Achieve more diversity, including Tribal and other minority representatives in attainment goals.
- Gain the involvement and support of local Economic Development people and programs.
- Explore successful models like 1 Million Cups, TEDx.

Group 2 Responses

- Train ND.
- Non-Traditional No More program from 2011 – 2013.

- Cooperative/Universal Branding within the post-secondary system.
- Increase the granularity of outreach efforts.
- Reduce barriers for PLA.
- Figure out how to tie this effort to the Governor's Main Street Initiative.
- Let incomplete students know that they can graduate based on the requirements from their start date and that they don't have to start over.

Group 3 Responses

- Advance tax credits for employers who support their employees ongoing education. (1 vote)
- Encourage the recognition of high-quality certificates within the state's attainment initiative. (2 votes)
- Support outreach efforts to students and workers with disabilities.
- Advance efforts to find and include students and workers from minority subgroups to take advantage of any state attainment initiative.
- Prepare an inclusive list of subgroup populations who should be considered for special attention in inclusion in the state's attainment programs, including the following, among others:
 - Support outreach efforts to veterans.
 - Immigrants
 - Ex-offenders (prison)
 - Students who are program non-completers.
- Reach out to the North Dakota Chamber to seek their support in business outreach efforts.
- Establish a formal means of finding and contacting potential students and workers who might benefit from an attainment program.
- Provide direct benefits to supportive employers, reach out to non-supportive employers, and provide direct benefits to workers who do not have the benefits of supportive employers.

3.0 Community Partnerships and Champions

Group 1 Responses

- Bank of ND.
- Traditional and non-traditional education opportunities.
- Tribal Colleges.
- Economic Development people and programs.
- Local businesses, business groups and Chambers of Commerce.
- Adult education programs.
- Job Services of ND.
- Lifelong learning, as Governor Burgum promotes.
- Legislators as champions of attainment.
- Philanthropic and funding partners.

Group 2 Responses

- Governor's Office.

- ND Job Service as a one stop shop for adults wanting to upscale their education - already do so for Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Education.
- Bank of North Dakota.
- Need Champions in the Legislature.
- Schools' Program Advisory Boards in 2-year post-secondary and high school.
- Employers by Industry.
- Post-secondary institutions themselves.
- Department of Human Services for people who are underemployed.
- Tribal leaders and councils.
- GNDC.

Group 3 Responses

- Bank of ND. (1 vote)
- Legislative Assembly. (2 votes)
- University System.
- Businesses.
- TrainND. (4 votes)
- ND Chamber. (1 vote)
- Governor's Office. (1 vote)
- Job Service.
- Commerce Department. (1 vote)
- Non-Profit Organizations.

4.0 Priorities

Group 1 Responses

- Identify and address barriers to adults returning to school. (7 votes)
- Look for different, diversified ways to establish, legislate and fund scholarship opportunities. (3 votes)
- Utilize Legislators as champions of attainment. (3 votes)
- Identify what certificates are needed, and where. Match the need with the right program, college. (3 votes)
- Target the population of people who have some college, convince them to finish. (2 votes)
- Advance emerging technologies and the high value certifications needed. (1 vote)
- Become a strong partner with the Governors Main Street Initiative. (1 vote)
- Improve opportunities for financial resources for students and/or more loan forgiveness. (1 vote)
- Work toward paying living wages. (1 vote)
- Address distance, remoteness as a barrier. (0 votes)
- Explore the activity of the Valley Prosperity Partnership to determine common interest, goals. (0 votes)
- Focus on high skill jobs. (0 votes)
- Help students "learn to learn" through college prep, tutoring, study skills, etc. (0 votes)

- Bank of ND (0 votes)
- Traditional and non-traditional education opportunities. (0 votes)
- Tribal Colleges. (0 votes)
- Gain the involvement and support of local Economic Development people and programs. (0 votes)
- Local businesses, business groups and Chambers of Commerce. (0 dots)
- Adult education programs. (0 dots)
- Job Services of ND. (0 dots)
- Lifelong learning, as Governor Burgum promotes. (0 dots)
- Philanthropic and funding partners. (0 dots)
- Tourism, noting controversy about school start and end dates. (0 dots)
- Explore Mississippi “Compete to Complete” initiative. (0 dots)
- Focus on getting students in the door first. (0 dots)
- Achieve more diversity, including Tribal and other minority representatives in attainment goals. (0 dots)
- Explore successful models like 1 Million Cups, TEDx. (0 dots)

During discussion, Group 1 identified certain recurring themes.

- This will require a significant paradigm shift for several systems and many individuals.
- We will need involvement of and buy-in from employers.

Group 2 Responses

- Need to have a champion(s) in the legislature. (8 votes)
- Reduction of PLA barriers. (4 votes)
- Figuring out how educational data sets include Native Americans. (3 votes)
- Development of a clearing house of information and resources to help increase graduate diversity to decrease economic hills and valleys in the state. (2 votes)
- Increase access to federal educational funds for adults that are above the poverty line. (2 votes)
- Increase the number of employer-based scholarships. (1 vote)
- Revamp state grant program. (1 vote)
- Job Service as a One Stop shop for adult students. (1 vote)

During discussions, Group 2 identified other important issues.

- Who are adults and other demographics we are trying to reach?
- Who’s the audience?
- What incentivizes entry-level employers to push their employees to post-secondary education?
- How do educational data sets include Native Americans?
- Define underemployment.

Group 3 Responses

- Seek legislative approval to access the state’s Legacy Fund to support statewide attainment initiative efforts. (4 votes)
- Resource Outreach: TrainND. (4 votes)

- Encourage the recognition of high-quality certificates within the state's attainment initiative. (2 votes)
- Resource Outreach: Legislative Assembly. (2 votes)
- Access the full use of Bank of ND resources and services. (1 vote)
- Seek legislative appropriations to institutionalize this effort. (1 vote)
- Advance tax credits for employers who support their employees ongoing education. (1 vote)
- Resource Outreach: Bank of ND. (1 vote)
- Resource Outreach: ND Chamber. (1 vote)
- Resource Outreach: Governor's Office. (1 vote)
- Resource Outreach: Commerce Department. (1 vote)