



**ACHIEVE60AZ**  
EDUCATION ADVANCES EVERYONE

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## **Achieve60AZ is Working to Find Solutions to Close Attainment Gaps**

*Arizona has made advances in past years in postsecondary attainment, but gaps in attainment persist for minorities.*

**Phoenix, AZ**— Although 45 percent of all Arizonans hold a postsecondary degree or credential, the same is not true for minority populations in the state. Achieve60AZ is working to find solutions and create action plans to close these attainment gaps. The alliance, in partnership with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and Lumina Foundation, recently organized three working groups each focused on increasing attainment for their respective communities: Native American, Latinx and African American.

“It is impossible to reach our attainment goal without engaging these communities and working to close attainment gaps for minorities,” **said Vince Yanez, Helios Education Foundation Senior Vice President of Arizona Community Engagement.** “The data show that these gaps are there, and we need to address them.”

Only 17 percent of Native American Arizonans, 26 percent of Latinx Arizonans, and 33 percent of African American Arizonans hold at least an associate degree. While these numbers do not include the five percent of Arizonans who hold a postsecondary certificate, they still display a staggering gap between attainment for minority populations and the general Arizona population. By 2030, Achieve60AZ hopes to reach the state postsecondary attainment goal, that 60 percent of Arizona adults would hold a postsecondary degree or credential. This goal cannot be realized without addressing the gaps that remain for minorities surrounding educational attainment.

Achieve60AZ began working on this issue last year after being awarded a national grant to look at equity in the attainment of Arizonans from WICHE and Lumina Foundation. The organization held roundtable discussions in which community leaders discussed the struggles their communities face when it comes to educational attainment and ways to address those gaps.

In response to feedback from roundtable discussions, Achieve60AZ has created three working groups: the Achieve60AZ Native American Attainment Equity Working Group, Achieve60AZ Latinx Attainment Equity Working Group, and Achieve60AZ African American Attainment Equity Working Group. Each group is comprised of community leaders from across the state to ensure the groups represent the voice of all of Arizona. Throughout the course of the coming months, each working group will work to establish community priorities to reach the statewide attainment goal. These groups will serve as a critical step in ensuring that the path to reaching the attainment goal, considers equity.

“We realize that this is not perfect science, and attainment will not simply become a reality because we set a goal,” **said Rachel Yanof, Executive Director of Achieve60AZ.** “But, as other states have done this work, they are realizing that without a laser focus on equity, actions that can seem logical to achieve the larger attainment goal can actually put a state in a position of exacerbating the gaps.”

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“In many ways, much of this work has already been started in these respective communities. We will be building on existing local efforts. We recognize that while this is an important step to meeting the statewide attainment goal, it is not the final solution. We plan to use these groups as a stepping stone on the path to attainment,” **Yanof said.**

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**About Achieve60AZ:** More than 100 organizations in Arizona form Achieve60AZ that is fueled by a community-based effort to ensure Arizona remains competitive through the power of education. Their collective goal is to generate greater awareness of the importance of increasing Arizona’s level of educational attainment while building support to improve college entry and completion; boost adult education and training; and fuel a pipeline of competitive talent for Arizona’s employers. Achieve60AZ promotes support for the long-term steps needed in college entry and completion, adult education and training, and identifying and closing skills gaps to better prepare our workforce and our state for the future when the majority of jobs in Arizona will require some type of higher education.

For more information, visit: [www.achieve60az.com](http://www.achieve60az.com).