

ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES

By: [Guest Opinion](#) February 8, 2018, 6:24 pm

Achieve60AZ was launched in September 2016 with the goal that by 2030, at least 60 percent of Arizonans would have some form of post-high school credential or degree. Throughout the past year, Achieve60AZ has worked on connecting organizations across the state and engaging leaders to create movement toward this goal.

To date, over 30 municipalities have adopted the attainment goal and several local communities have made progress toward educational attainment through cross-sector collaboration. The Achieve60AZ initiative has united people and groups under a shared vision of education and a brighter future for our state. This is just the beginning.

Achieve60AZ is an alliance of more than 70 statewide education, business, community, and philanthropic organizations to increase Arizona's level of educational attainment. Achieve60AZ is unique in that it utilizes a grassroots approach focusing on engaging key community leaders from different industries to create strategic partnerships and identify best practices.

The alliance is focused on four main initiatives: improving the K-12 pipeline, increasing the number of Arizonans completing credentials, increasing access to postsecondary education, and aligning workforce needs. We know that through encouraging post high school educational attainment, we will help to create a more skilled and diversified workforce and equip our state economy to compete nationally and globally.

Arizona is growing and expanding both in population and employment opportunities. Recent data from U-Haul shows Tempe as the No. 1 Growth City in the U.S. in 2017. New and expanding businesses and quality educational institutions have made Arizona an incredibly attractive job market for new talent. We are now the eighth fastest growing state and Phoenix recently became the fifth largest city in the nation. Arizona is making great strides and we must maintain this momentum of attracting and retaining top talent.

Expect More Arizona, one of our key partners, is working diligently across our state to inform local governments and municipalities about the Achieve60AZ goal and the Arizona Education Progress Meter. To understand what we need to do to progress as a state, we must accurately know where we stand.

The Arizona Education Progress Meter provides reliable information on several issues like access to quality early learning and postsecondary attainment. In order to work better together as a state, we must be united under one goal and understand our standards for measurement. All over our state, municipalities have made the Achieve60AZ goal their own and are working toward increasing educational attainment within their own communities.

Upon adopting the Achieve60AZ goal in Pinal County, community leaders banded together to establish Achieve Pinal, a formal committee of the Pinal Alliance for Economic Growth. They are focused on improving Pinal County through increasing the level of educational attainment in their community and preparing their future workforce.

Cities like Yuma and Flagstaff have developed strong community efforts in support of increasing educational attainment. In Yuma, Arizona Western College, the Southwest Technical Education District of Yuma, the Yuma County Education Service Agency, and the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce are involved and working toward the 60 percent goal.

The city of Flagstaff has also adopted the Progress Meter and Achieve60AZ, and organizations like the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, Northern Arizona University, the Northern Arizona Leadership Alliance, LAUNCH Flagstaff, and GEAR UP are working toward finding innovative solutions to help their community.

I hope to continue Achieve60AZ's forward momentum by developing new strategic partnerships and expanding our statewide reach. We cannot accomplish this goal alone — it will require the help of parents, teachers, administrators, business owners, community leaders, and legislators to help us increase educational attainment. I am proud of the progress to date and I look forward to moving the initiative forward.

— Rachel Yanof is Executive Director of Achieve60AZ.

The views expressed in guest commentaries are those of the author and are not the views of the Arizona Capitol Times.

Source: <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2018/02/08/alliance-works-to-boost-education-levels-beyond-high-school/>