RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK
School of Management and Labor Relations

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH CENTER

ISSUE BRIEF | November 2024

Maryland Noncredit Data Snapshot

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Project Background

Adults seeking further education have long shown keen interest in noncredit education. An estimated 4 million people enroll in noncredit programs annually, and surveys have found that at least half of adults interested in further postsecondary learning seek an alternative to college degree programs.[1] Policymakers also recognize the potential value of noncredit and related programs. A 50-state scan identified state-led initiatives in 28 states, totaling at least $3.8 billion, in support for attainment of short-term credentials.[2]

- Given the growing interest and public investment in short-term alternatives to college degree programs, policymakers and practitioners generally agree on the importance of a strong evidence base to inform decision-making. Yet state collection and analysis of noncredit data remains inconsistent and difficult to use for policymaking purposes, making direct comparisons across states dauntingly hard. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers regularly encounter varying definitions, an absence of educational or labor market outcomes data, and overall data quality issues.[3] At the most basic level, very little is known about the characteristics of noncredit programs, such as their instructional time, instructional format, requirements for entry, linkages to further education, awarding agencies, cost, and credential types awarded. Better data on noncredit offerings within states will help inform ongoing measurement efforts and ensure those efforts are more grounded in the realities of noncredit delivery, financing, and learner outcomes.

[1] Jacoby, T. (September 2021). *The indispensable institution: Taking the measure of community college workforce education*. Opportunity America. https://opportunityamericaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FINAL-survey-report.pdf; Strada. (2020, September 16). *Public viewpoint: Interested but not enrolled: Understanding and serving aspiring adult learners.* https://cci.stradaeducation.org/pv-release-september-16-2020/

[2] Murphy, S. (2023). *A typology and policy landscape analysis of state investments in short-term credential pathways*. HCM Strategists. https://hcmstrategists.com/resources/a-typology-and-policy-landscape-analysis-of-state-investments-in-short-term-credential-pathways

[3] D'Amico, M. M. (2017). Noncredit education: Specialized programs to meet local needs. In K. B. Wilson & R. L. Garza-Mitchell (Eds.), Forces shaping community college missions (No. 180, pp. 57–66). New directions for community colleges. Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20281; Erwin, M. (2019). Noncredit enrollment and related activities (NPEC 2019). National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, with US Department of Education funding; Romano, R. M., & D'Amico, M. M. (2021, July/August). How federal data shortchange the community college. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 53(4), 22–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2021.1930978

With support from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)/National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) and key partners at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Michigan, and University of California–Irvine are working with state leaders from across the country as part of the State Noncredit Data Project (SNDP). The SNDP examines noncredit data to achieve three key goals:

- Develop an inventory of and consistent operational definitions for state-level noncredit data elements to better understand the noncredit data infrastructure.
- Collect and examine noncredit course/program-level data to explore noncredit offerings and their associations with enrollment rates, outcomes, instructional characteristics, and financial arrangements.
- Uncover the drivers of noncredit offerings and produce relevant policy implications.

In addition to this analysis, the SNDP convenes a Learning Community of states on data for noncredit education and non-degree credentials. The Learning Community is designed to bring together state leaders to share current practices related to state noncredit data. Through our research and convening, SNDP seeks to lay the groundwork for common definitional language for future data collection and analysis efforts to improve the understanding of the value and quality of noncredit programs and non-degree credentials.

Methods

This report is one in a series that explores the noncredit data infrastructure of US states and presents descriptive analyses of those data at the course/program and provider level. The findings presented in these reports were reached using a multi-phased collaborative approach with leaders in partner states. The first step was to engage with state partners about the context for noncredit and related data collection. This ongoing engagement included regular conversations, off-line questions, and the collection of relevant policy and process information on noncredit categories, determinants of noncredit success, instructional characteristics, finance, and related topics. The engagement process has been critical to understanding the state noncredit landscape and data collection.

The next step was to develop a robust inventory of each of the data elements potentially available from state agencies and organizations. Through engagement with state partners, cross-state meetings, a review of prior literature and resources,[4,5,6] and program-level data analyses with our first three research states (Iowa, Louisiana, and Virginia), the project team created a noncredit data taxonomy[7] for the organization of relevant data elements. The key elements in the taxonomy—(1) purpose and design, (2) outcomes, (3) demographics and enrollment, and (4) finance—guide the organization of available data elements in the present report (see Table 1) and the

[4] D'Amico, M. M., Morgan, G. B., Robertson, S., & Houchins, C. (2014). An exploration of noncredit community college enrollment. Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 62(3), 152–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2014.953438; D'Amico, 2017.

[5] IPEDS. (2021–22). Glossary. https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary

[6] Jacoby, T. (2021). The indispensable institution: Taking the measure of community college workforce education. Opportunity America. https://opportunityamericaonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/FINAL-survey-report.pdf

[7] D'Amico, M., Van Noy, M., Srivastava, A., Bahr, P., & Xu, D. (2023). Collecting and understanding noncredit community college data: A taxonomy and how-to guide for states. Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center. https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2023/11/State-Noncredit-Taxonomy_EERC_11.17.23.pdf

subsequent analyses on providers and programs that follow. In this next phase of the project, the project team is working with an additional group of states (including South Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, and Tennessee) to understand the nature of their noncredit data.

A critical step in the project toward creating a sustainable, robust noncredit data system is to build state-level datasets consistent with the available data on these identified and defined data elements. In this report, we will rely on two primary data sources from Maryland to achieve this goal. Our first data source is the full set of records of noncredit course offerings from the fiscal year 2023. This dataset includes key course-level information about every approved course offered by any of the state's community colleges. In 2022–23, Maryland reported 6,590 offerings across 16 institutions. In addition to the course offering data, we also explore Maryland's public-facing Workforce Training Completion Dashboard, maintained by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).[8] This dashboard includes information about community college students who complete a noncredit workforce sequence in the state. During the same fiscal year, Maryland reported 17,522 noncredit workforce sequence completers. Detailed information about these completers, including their demographic characteristics and employment outcomes, are reported on MHEC's data dashboard.

Maryland's Policy Context for Noncredit

The two major players in the Maryland noncredit ecosystem are MHEC and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC). The former provides the regulatory framework, while the latter is an association that supports Maryland's community colleges in working together to improve outcomes for students. Each community college in Maryland is independent, with distinct governing boards focused on local needs and initiatives. In other words, there is no "system" of community colleges in Maryland. In lieu of that framework, MACC is an association "that advocates for the 16 community colleges in Maryland and the students they serve."[9]

MHEC is a coordinating board with statutory obligations that sets regulatory standards. They are responsible for setting state higher education policies for Maryland's public and private colleges, as well as its for-profit career institutions. The commission also administers state financial aid policies, although it does not distribute federal funds. It is important to note that not all states have governance over for-profit career schools; some have an agency with oversight powers, and others have entirely separate governing structures for such institutions.

MHEC has a regulatory role over workforce-oriented noncredit offerings in the state, ensuring that these courses meet the standards set by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). However, there is no regulatory oversight or state funding from MHEC for noncredit courses that are purely for personal enrichment.

[8] Maryland Higher Education Commission. (2024). Workforce Training Completion Dashboard [Dataset].https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiYTlkNzMzYjUtOTVjMy00YzdmLTkyMjItMzQzNmE2OWJlMTNhIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

[9] Maryland Association of Community Colleges. (n.d.). Advocacy. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://mdacc.org/advocacy/

As we will discuss in more detail below, Maryland's data reporting is notably more comprehensive for workforce-oriented noncredit programs than for noncredit courses serving other purposes (i.e., pre-college/basic skills or personal interest/avocational).

MACC, on the other hand, does not have a regulatory role, but rather focuses on advocacy and collaboration. They help bring together senior leaders from Maryland's 16 community colleges, organizing them into affinity groups that coordinate statewide initiatives and implement decisions from the Maryland Council of Community College Presidents. This collaboration fosters a unified approach to addressing common challenges and advancing educational goals across the state.

Noncredit Policy Priorities

Maryland has been engaged in ongoing efforts to define its mission and priorities for noncredit education, a process that is impacted by recent and influential legislation. One of the most influential pieces of legislation is the Maryland Department of Education's Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Enacted in 2021, the Blueprint is a comprehensive reform bill aimed at transforming Maryland's public education system. While the Blueprint primarily focuses on pre-K–12 education, it includes a crucial pillar dedicated to college and career readiness. This pillar not only emphasizes the importance of preparing students for postsecondary education but also sets forth ambitious plans to expand the state's career and technical education (CTE) system.[10] The expansion of CTE is directly linked to the availability of career-oriented opportunities, which often includes noncredit programs as these programs often provide the specialized training and certifications essential for workforce readiness in high school. The Blueprint outlines a multi-year implementation plan, with specific milestones and reporting requirements to ensure that the state's educational institutions align with these new priorities.

In addition to the Blueprint, other key legislative initiatives have further influenced Maryland's approach to noncredit education. The More Jobs for Marylanders Act (MJFM) of 2017, for instance, plays a pivotal role in aligning noncredit offerings with the state's economic development goals. This act established a scholarship program specifically designed to support "workforce development sequences"—targeted educational programs that equip individuals with the skills needed for high-demand jobs—which often include noncredit courses. Additionally, the act set annual income goals for specific populations, reinforcing the state's commitment to using education as a tool for economic mobility and addressing workforce shortages. In a similar vein, the Career Preparation Expansion Act (CPEA) of 2018 introduced requirements for workforce outcomes reporting, particularly for high school graduates.[11] This legislation mandated that educational institutions offering apprenticeships and other workforce-related programs (including noncredit programs) collect and report detailed data from nationally recognized certification bodies, postsecondary vocational credential programs, and state business licensing authorities. By ensuring that comprehensive data are

[10] Maryland State Department of Education. (n.d.). What is the Blueprint for Maryland's Future? Blueprint. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/about/

[11] Schmertz, B., & Kellogg, A. T. (2022, August 9). "It can't be done"—How Maryland went from "no" to "yes" on collecting unit record noncredit data. SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference. https://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-09-It-cant-be-done-How-Maryland-went-from-no-to-yes-on-collecting-unit-record-noncredit-data.pdf

collected and analyzed, we believe that this act may help create a more transparent and accountable system that better tracks the effectiveness of educational programs in preparing students for the workforce.

Funding

A substantial portion of state support provided to Maryland community colleges is earmarked for continuing education.[12] The state restricts funding to noncredit programs that are workforce oriented, excluding recreational courses. Courses must be at least five contact hours in length, include faculty and student interaction (either direct or delayed), and be open to the public (for all non-contract training) in order to be approved for state funding.[13] Colleges must maintain records of, at minimum, course descriptions and objectives, enrollment, and student residency for state-funded noncredit programs.[14]

Maryland also offers financial aid for noncredit students through various grant and scholarship programs. These programs include the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship, which grants up to $2,000 to community college students enrolled in a noncredit series related to a registered apprenticeship, licensure, certification, or upskilling.[15] Starting in the 2024–25 school year, students will be able to use the state's Community College Promise Scholarship for sequences of noncredit courses that lead to licensure.[16] Interested students must submit a FAFSA form or the MHEC One Application, which is the state's financial aid application for undocumented individuals, and complete the Promise Non-Credit Application.

Federal funding, namely Pell and WIOA grants, is also part of the noncredit funding puzzle in Maryland. Some programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials are eligible for Pell funding. Relatedly, since program sequences are not uniform across the state, the number of contact hours for a given program oftentimes will align with the minimal amount needed to make the program fundable. WIOA grants are another important funding source. These grants also influence how noncredit data are collected in Maryland via a process managed by the Maryland Department of Labor. Despite the potential benefits of WIOA funds, there is relatively low participation in WIOA-funded programs among Maryland institutions, particularly among community colleges. This low participation rate can be attributed in part to the complexities and challenges associated with meeting WIOA's data reporting requirements. To improve data collection and enhance workforce development efforts, the Maryland DOL, with MHEC serving as a subgrantee, recently secured funding through the US Department of Labor's Workforce Data Quality Initiative. This grant aims to improve the quality and accessibility of workforce-related data.

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[12] Maryland Higher Education Commission & Maryland Community College Association for Continuing Education and Training. (2020). Continuing Education Manual for Maryland Community Colleges FY 2020.

[13] COMAR 13B.07.02.02.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship. (n.d.). Maryland Higher Education Commission. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/default.aspx

[16]Community College Promise Scholarship. (n.d.). Maryland Higher Education Commission. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/default.aspx

Drivers of Noncredit Data Collection

As mentioned above, Maryland has legislatively mandated the reporting of noncredit data specifically related to workforce training programs, a process that MHEC oversees. The state has focused its noncredit data efforts on developing unit record collections for workforce training programs, which, unlike basic skills or personal enrichment offerings, are eligible for state funding. As of summer 2024, MHEC has three years of unit record data on workforce sequence completers, and they are currently piloting a course-taking collection on noncredit workforce courses, for which data will be available in January 2025.[17] This new collection will give the state a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of workforce offerings, capturing, for example, the progress of people working slowly over time toward noncredit sequence completion.

Maryland's data collecting requirements have changed and evolved over the course of the past decade. In the mid-2010s, the Joint Chairmen's Report (JCR) of the state's legislative budget committees suggested that MHEC should create a noncredit report including information on items such as enrollment rates and completion and workforce outcomes.[18] These efforts were stymied by a lack of the standard definitions for noncredit programming, standard classification methods for continuing education sequences, and standard reporting requirements.[19] However, the combined interests through the JCRs and legislation (MJFM and CPEA) led to the formation of workgroups to develop reporting standards for noncredit workforce training programs in the state.

Noncredit data collections in Maryland are managed by many groups, with two of the most notable being MHEC, Maryland Department of Labor (via WIOA requirements), and MACC. MHEC approves courses classified as noncredit workforce training, approves funding related to these courses, and has the legal authority to collect noncredit data and develop associated policies. Data are provided to MHEC from each institution's Institutional Research office. MACC, as an advocacy group, lacks regulatory powers and does not have authority over Continuing Education Unit credits or continuing education programs, though it still maintains an independent noncredit data collection.

Another notable driver of noncredit data collection is the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDS), the state's central repository for educational and workforce data. Institutions are interested in including noncredit workforce completer data in the MLDS so that the data may be linked to other education and workforce data to capture labor market outcomes and further study the education-workforce pipeline.[20] The MLDS has a good match rate on linkages to credit and is working on strengthening their ability to match noncredit program completers in the system.

A final driver of noncredit data collection efforts in Maryland is the state's participation in the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Noncredit Mobility Academy alongside Louisiana, Massachusetts, Montana, Texas, and

[17] Prior to this, MHEC received aggregate student enrollment in applicable noncredit courses for the purposes of funding allocations.
[18] Schmertz, B., & Kellogg, A. T. (2022, August 9). "It can't be done"—How Maryland went from "no" to "yes" on collecting unit record noncredit data. SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference. https://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-09-It-cant-be-done-How-Maryland-went-from-no-to-yes-on-collecting-unit-record-noncredit-data.pdf
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

Virginia.[21] As part of this effort, Maryland is bringing together noncredit leaders from MHEC, MLDS, MACC, the Maryland Department of Labor, and the Governor's Workforce Development Board in hope of determining the state's noncredit policy priorities more systematically.

Classifying Noncredit Offerings

The SNDP team uses the term "offering" to capture the full spectrum of noncredit courses, sequences, and programs available in each state. In Maryland, the state plays a crucial role in determining whether a noncredit offering qualifies as workforce oriented. To be classified as a workforce training offering, the course or sequence must be part of an approved noncredit program designed to facilitate career advancement. These offerings typically align with job preparation, registered apprenticeships, licensure, certification, or skill enhancement. Among workforce training offerings, some courses are designed as standalone units, providing specific skills or credentials independently. Others are structured as part of a sequence, where a series of related courses are taken together to form a more comprehensive training program.[22] It is important to note that in Maryland, "continuing education" serves as an umbrella category that includes all noncredit offerings at community colleges. This broad classification covers both workforce development courses, which are career-oriented, and personal enrichment courses, which focus on personal interests or general knowledge. The state's approach to classifying these offerings reflects its commitment to providing a diverse range of educational opportunities.

Data Inventory

When embarking on the first round of our project with partner states Iowa, Louisiana, and Virginia, the project team worked with state representatives to explore the data elements within their state data systems. When concluding that round, we developed a Noncredit Data Taxonomy and How-To-Guide to serve as a primer for states just beginning data collection or refining their approach. We have since refined and updated that work. Table 1 shows the complete inventory of potential noncredit data elements as it has been re-organized from our original taxonomy. The table displays which of these data points are included in the data collected by the MHEC and how complete those data are: if data are available on all, most (more than 2/3), many (more than 1/3 but fewer than 2/3), some (fewer than 1/3), or none of the system's noncredit offerings.

Table 1 presents the availability of existing data elements within Maryland. It is important to clarify that this inventory reflects only the data elements reported to and maintained at the state level, not the full scope of data captured by individual institutions.

Table 1: State-Level Noncredit Data Inventory for Maryland

Category	Subcategory	State-Level Data Availability
Purpose and Design		
Field of Study	Course/program name	All

[21] For more about the noncredit data practices of Louisiana and Virginia, see Bahr, Cable, D'Amico and Van Noy (2023) and Xu, Finnegan, Bagreev, Li, D'Amico, and Van Noy (2023).

[22] Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship. (n.d.). Maryland Higher Education Commission. Retrieved July 10, 2024, from https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/default.aspx

	CIP code	All
	SOC code	None
	Career cluster	None
Noncredit Type	Occupational, sponsored, pre-college, personal interest, or aligned with IPEDS	All
Program Length	Number of courses if multi-course program	Many[1]
	Total contact hours	All
Delivery	Face-to-face	All
	Face-to-face location	None
	Online	All
	Blended	All
	Competency-based	None
	Work-based learning required	None
	Student service availability	None
	Faculty data	None
Outcomes		
Academic Outcomes	Students continue to credit	None[2]
	Completion data availability	Many
Labor Market Outcomes	Pre-enrollment employment	All
	Post-enrollment employment	All
	Pre-enrollment salary/wage	All
	Post-employment salary/wage	All
Non-Degree Credential Outcomes	Industry certification	All
	Occupational licensure	All
	College-issued certificate	None
	Microcredentials	None
	Apprenticeship	None
Demographics and Enrollment[3]		
Enrollments	Headcount	Most
	Contact hours	All
Demographics	Race/ethnicity	Many
	Age	Many
	Sex/gender	Many
Identifiers	Social Security number	All
	Institutional identification number	All
	Names	None
	Birth dates	None
Finance		
Tuition	Course/program tuition	None
State and Federal Funding	State reimbursement	All
	WIOA-eligible training provider	None
	Economic development incentive	None
	Other federal grants	None[4]
	Other state grants	None[5]

Notes.

[1]This field is mandatory starting with the 2025 collection year.

[2] MHEC is beginning to collect this, but they do not have it published yet.

[3]As mentioned previously, Maryland has legislatively mandated the reporting of noncredit data specifically related to workforce training programs, and MHEC oversees this data collection. As of summer 2024, MHEC has three years of unit record data on workforce course and sequence completers—students who have completed noncredit workforce training courses or sequences. Therefore, all demographic and employment variables are available only for students who completed noncredit workforce courses/sequences. As we will show in the Findings section, around 62 percent of all offerings are workforce training. Accordingly, we use "many" (more than one-third but fewer than two-thirds of offerings) to indicate data availability for these variables.

[4]Collection is currently in development.

[5]Collection is currently in development.

Description of State Data

Maryland's comprehensive approach to collecting data on noncredit workforce training programs provides a rich source of information for analyzing the state's educational landscape. To present a detailed snapshot of noncredit education in Maryland, we rely on two primary data sources: a dataset of course offerings and a dataset of students who have completed noncredit workforce sequences.

Course Offerings Dataset

First, we utilize the full dataset of course offerings from the fiscal year 2023. This dataset allows us to examine key areas of noncredit education, including: (1) the distribution of noncredit offerings by type, such as workforce training, personal enrichment, and basic skills programs; (2) the types of non-degree credentials awarded within these noncredit categories, providing insights into the scope and scale of credentialing across the state; and (3) the instructional characteristics of noncredit offerings, which include details on delivery modes (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid), course duration, and faculty qualifications.

Workforce Sequence Completers Dataset

We also use information drawn from MHEC's data dashboard, which specifically focuses on students who have completed noncredit workforce training programs during the 2023 fiscal year ("completers"). The dashboard provides detailed insights into the demographics, completion subjects, and post-completion employment outcomes of these completers. By focusing on completers, we gain a deeper understanding of how Maryland's noncredit workforce training programs are supporting student success and contributing to the state's workforce development objectives.

Across the 16 community colleges in Maryland, 22,648 noncredit awards (i.e., "completions") were awarded to 17,522 unique students (or "completers") in FY 2023. These awards include "approved workforce certificate programs that lead to apprenticeships, employment, licensure, or a job skill enhancement at a Maryland Community College." To put this number in context, during the same period of time, Maryland community colleges awarded 17,434 credentials for credit programs, which include lower division certificates and associate degrees. In other words, 57 percent of the total awards granted in Maryland in FY 2023 (22,684 of 40,082) were for noncredit offerings.

Findings

Purpose and Design

Key findings about noncredit offerings and delivery in Maryland include the following:

- The most striking takeaway is the clear dominance of workforce development within Maryland's noncredit offerings. When aggregating the data for workforce development categories, it becomes evident that workforce-oriented education is the state's primary focus for noncredit education. These categories collectively account for 4,089 courses, representing 62 percent of all noncredit offerings during the FY 2023. (See Table 2.)
- Among workforce-oriented offerings, courses aimed at providing licensure or certification made up 25 percent of all noncredit offerings; another 25 percent of noncredit offerings were focused on enhancing specific job-related skills, whereas 12 percent of noncredit offerings focused on job preparation (Table 2).
- Maryland's noncredit offerings included a significant number of general education and basic skills courses, which together constituted the remaining 38 percent of the total noncredit offerings. The majority (77%) of the non-workforce-oriented noncredit courses in Maryland fell into the category of basic skills. (See Table 2.)
- The data reveal significant variation in the percentage of courses tied to industry certificates across different noncredit categories. (See Table 3.)
- The workforce development/licensure or certification category stands out, with 62 percent of its 1,634 offerings associated with an industry certificate. (See Table 3.)
- Very few courses in the other two workforce training categories, namely job preparatory and job skill enhancement, were linked to industry certifications. This indicates that while these courses are essential for improving job-related skills, their primary focus is not on providing formal certifications. Instead, these courses are designed to help individuals build foundational skills necessary for entering the workforce or to support skill development and professional growth, enabling workers to enhance their competencies and remain competitive in the job market without necessarily earning a new credential. (See Table 3.)
- About 16 percent of the total noncredit offerings in Maryland during FY 2023 were associated with industry-recognized certifications. This indicates that while a significant portion of the state's noncredit education was aligned with industry standards, the majority of offerings focused on broader educational objectives, such as skill enhancement and foundational learning, without necessarily leading to a formal industry-recognized credential. (See Table 3.)
- Average contact hours, which indicate the duration of instruction, varied widely across noncredit types. Basic skills courses had the highest median and mean contact hours (57 and 55 hours, respectively), reflecting the intensive nature of foundational skill development. (See Table 4.)
- Among workforce development offerings, licensure or certification courses also had relatively high contact hours, with a median of 40 and a mean of 47 hours, indicating the comprehensive instruction required to

prepare students for industry certifications. In contrast, general education and job skill enhancement courses had lower contact hours, with means of 22 and 24 hours, respectively. (See Table 4.)

- Face-to-face instruction was the primary delivery method for noncredit courses, especially in basic skills (60%) and general education (55%) courses. (See Table 4.)
- Interestingly, a non-trivial proportion of the noncredit offerings in Maryland were dual-delivered through both online and in-person instruction, a format that provides greater flexibility for students to choose the mode of participation that best suits their needs. (See Table 4.)
- Online-only and hybrid delivery methods were also utilized, with these approaches being more common in job skill enhancement and job preparatory courses compared to other noncredit offerings. (See Table 4.)
- In the 2022–23 academic year, there were 17,522 unique completers but a total of 22,648 completions, indicating that some students completed multiple courses or sequences.[23]
- Shorter-duration programs (32 hours or fewer) accounted for almost half of all completions. This could be due to a combination of factors, including the greater number of course offerings (as illustrated in Table 4) and their higher enrollment numbers, and because their shorter time commitment enabled more programs to be completed within the timeframe. (See Figure 1.)

Table 2: Noncredit Offerings by Type

Noncredit Type		Number of Offerings	% of all Noncredit Offerings
Workforce Development	Job preparatory	788	12%
	Licensure or certification	1,634	25%
	Job skill enhancement	1,667	25%
Basic Skills		571	9%
General Education		1,930	29%
Total		6,590	100%

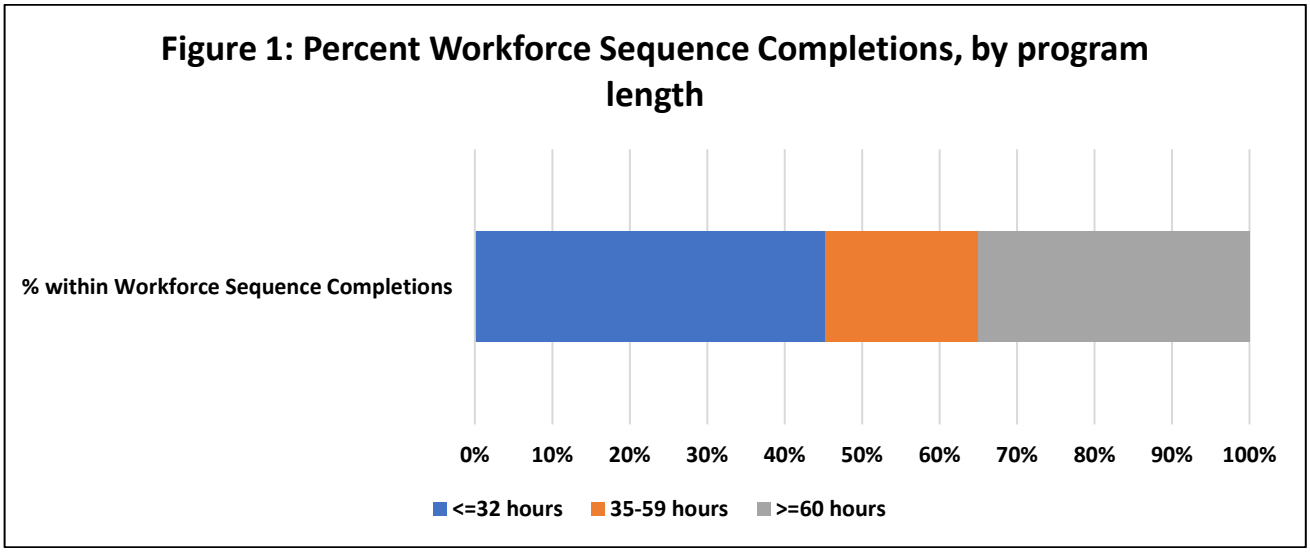
Table 3: Non-Degree Credentials by Noncredit Type

Noncredit Type		Number of Offerings	% Associated with an Industry Certificate
Workforce Development	Job preparatory	788	1%
	Licensure or certification	1,634	62%
	Job skill enhancement	1,667	2%
Basic Skills		571	0%
General Education		1,930	<1%
Total		6,590	Approx. 16%

[23] It should be noted that the word "completions" refers to the number of courses or sequences completed by students within an approved workforce certificate program in a given academic year. A single student may have multiple completions in any given year. A "completer," however, is a unique student—counted only once in the dataset regardless of how many programs they finish.

Table 4: Instructional Characteristics by Noncredit Type

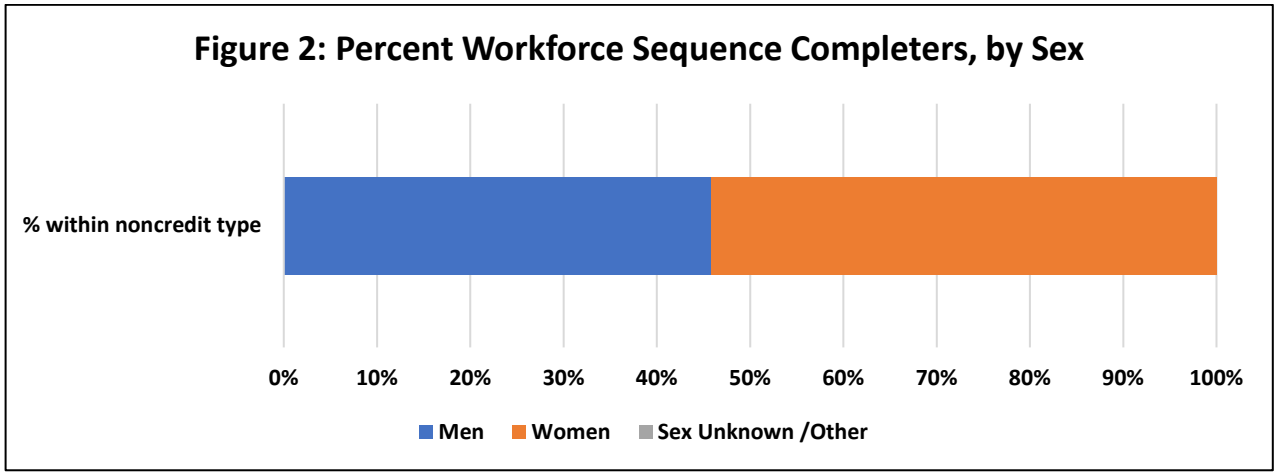
Noncredit Type		Courses		Contact Hours		*Online ONLY*	*Face-to-Face ONLY*	*Hybrid ONLY*	*Dual Delivery*
		N	%	Median	Mean	%	%	%	%
Workforce Development	Job preparatory	788	12	30	41	27	54	5	14
	Licensure or certification	1,634	25	40	47	15	52	12	21
	Job skill enhancement	1,667	25	20	24	30	45	4	22
Basic Skills		571	9	57	55	7	60	6	28
General Education		1,930	29	18	22	15	55	1	29
Total		6,590	100	20	34	19	52	5	23



Demographics and Enrollment

Figures 2–4[24] present the distribution of noncredit workforce course/program completers[25] in Maryland community colleges for the 2022–23 collection year by race/ethnicity, age, and gender, with the following key findings:

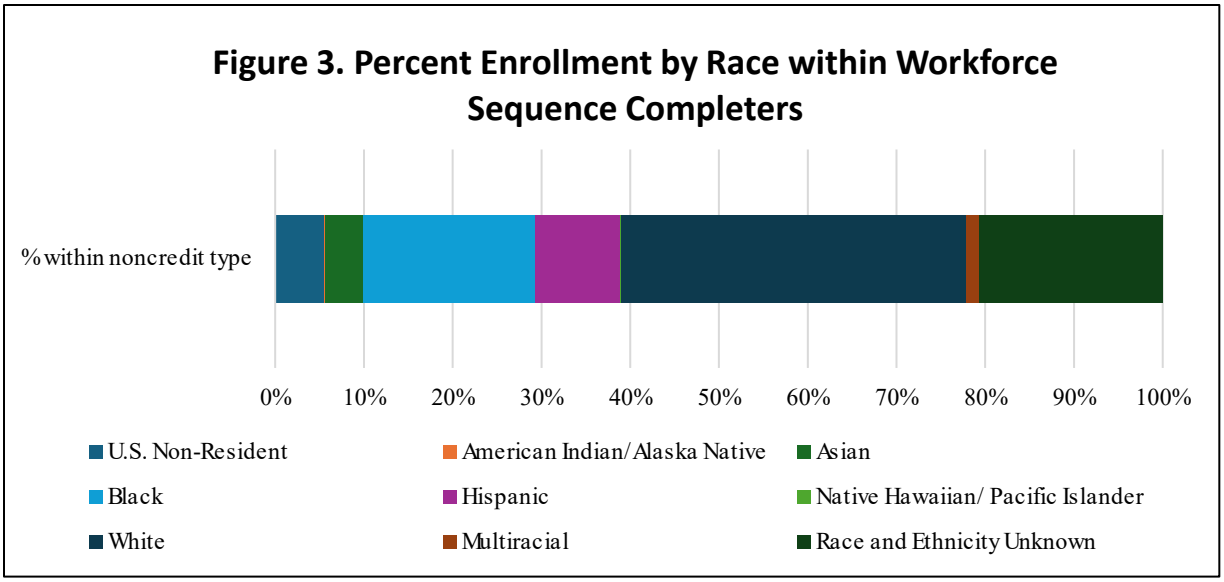
- Female completers constituted the majority, representing 54 percent of the total noncredit workforce program completers. (See Figure 2.)
- White students represented the largest racial/ethnic group among noncredit workforce program completers, making up 39 percent of students in the dataset (Figure 3). The next largest proportions of completers by racial/ethnic group included Black or African American (19%) and Hispanic (10%) students. (See Figure 3.)
- The plurality of noncredit workforce program completers—44 percent—fell within the 25 to 44 years old category. (See Figure 4.)[26]
- Around one-fifth of completers were younger students who were below 25 years of age. (See Figure 4.)

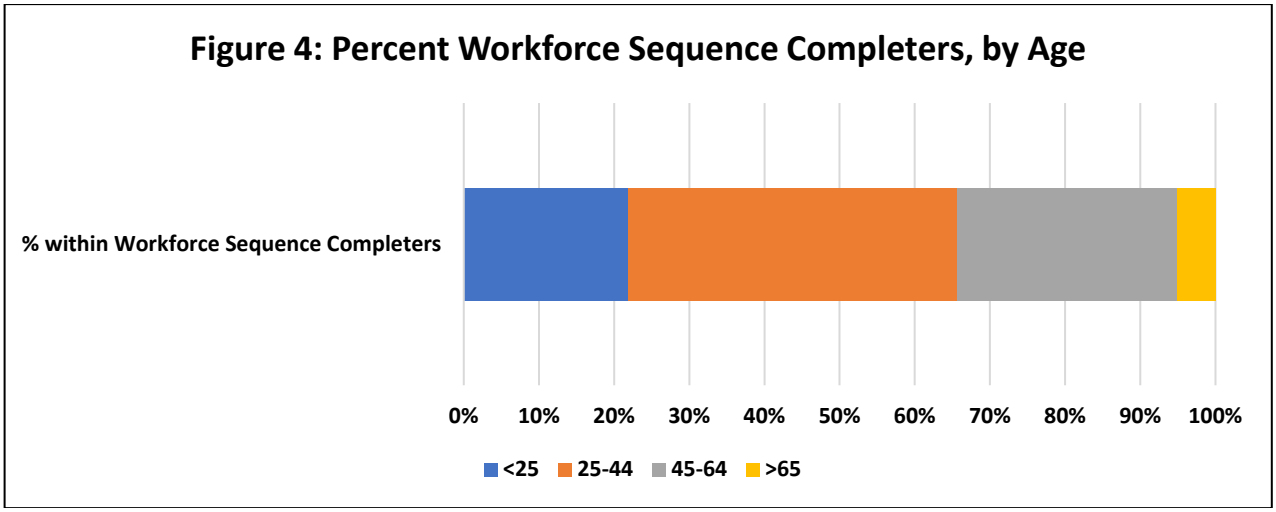


[24] Data for Figures 2–4 can be found at: MHEC. (2024). *Workforce Training Completion Dashboard*. p. 7. https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiYTlkNzMzYjUtOTVjMy00YzdmLTkyMjItMzQzNmE2OWJlMTNhIiwidCI6IjYwYWZlOWUyLTQ5Y2QtNDliMS04ODUxLTY0ZGYwMjc2YTJlOCJ9

[25] "Completers" are defined as students who enrolled in Maryland community colleges and who have successfully completed a course or series of courses in an approved workforce certificate program leading to apprenticeships, employment, licensure, or job skill enhancement. Should a student complete more than one course type or sequence type, they are counted only once as a completer.

[26] Age was calculated using students' year of birth and the date they completed a course type or course sequence.





Outcomes

Table 5 presents the distribution of noncredit workforce program completions, focusing on the relationship between program completions and licensure or industry certification requirements. Appendix A presents data on the earnings visibility and average quarterly earnings for students who completed noncredit workforce training programs in Maryland community colleges between the academic years 2020 and 2023. The analysis focuses on completions rather than completers, meaning that the data reflect each instance of program completion, even if a student completed multiple programs. The table compares median and average quarterly earnings one year before and one year after program completion, offering insights into the economic impact of these training programs across various fields of study. The main findings from these sources are as follows:

- The majority of noncredit workforce course/program completions (approximately 72% combined) were tied to programs where obtaining a certification or licensure is required, either through an industry exam

external to the course (45%), concurrent with coursework (17%), or internal to the course (10%). (See Table 5.)

- About 26 percent of completions were from courses/programs where certification or licensure is not applicable. These courses/programs were likely to focus on skill enhancement, job preparation, or other educational goals that do not require formal certification. (See Table 5.)
- Earnings visibility, which refers to the percentage of program completers with valid earnings data available, varied significantly across different fields of study. For instance, fields such as health professions and related programs and homeland security, law enforcement, firefighting and related protective services had high post-completion earnings visibility rates of 77 percent and 79 percent, respectively, indicating strong data availability and likely stable employment outcomes. (See Appendix A.)
- On the other hand, fields like visual and performing arts and English language and literature/letters show lower post-completion earnings visibility rates of 28 percent and 44 percent, respectively, which may reflect either lower employment rates in these fields or challenges in tracking employment outcomes. (See Appendix A.)
- Overall, the data show a noticeable increase in earnings visibility from one year before completion to one year after completion across most fields of study. For example, in agricultural/animal/plant/veterinary science and related fields, earnings visibility increased from 39 percent before completion to 67 percent after completion. This increase suggests that more students might have secured employment or have had more trackable earnings after completing their training. (See Appendix A.)
- Across many fields, there was a notable increase in average quarterly earnings from one year before to one year after program completion. For example, construction trades saw average quarterly earnings increase from $16,718 to $19,308 (a 16% increase), reflecting the value of workforce training in boosting income potential. (See Appendix A.)
- Despite the increase in earnings across the majority of fields, earnings outcomes varied widely depending on the field of study. High-paying fields such as biological and biomedical sciences and engineering/engineering-related technologies/technicians offered substantial post-completion earnings, of $27,890 and $18,665, respectively. (See Appendix A.)
- In contrast, fields such as culinary, entertainment & personal services and health-related knowledge & skills show lower post-completion earnings, at $10,426 and $12,618 respectively. These fields, while essential, may not command as high wages, highlighting the diverse economic impacts of different noncredit workforce training programs. (See Appendix A.)

Table 5: Workforce Sequence Completions by Licensure/Industry Certification Requirements

		Workforce Sequence Completions	
		n*	%
Licensure/Industry Certification Required	Industry exam external to course[1]	10,240	45.2%
	Concurrent with course work[2]	3,854	17.0%
	Industry exam internal to course[3]	2,162	9.5%
No Licensure/Industry Certification Required[4]		5,798	25.6%
Licensure/Industry Certification Requirement Not Specified[5]		594	2.6%
Total		22,648	100.0%

Notes.

*n = Number of licenses/certifications earned

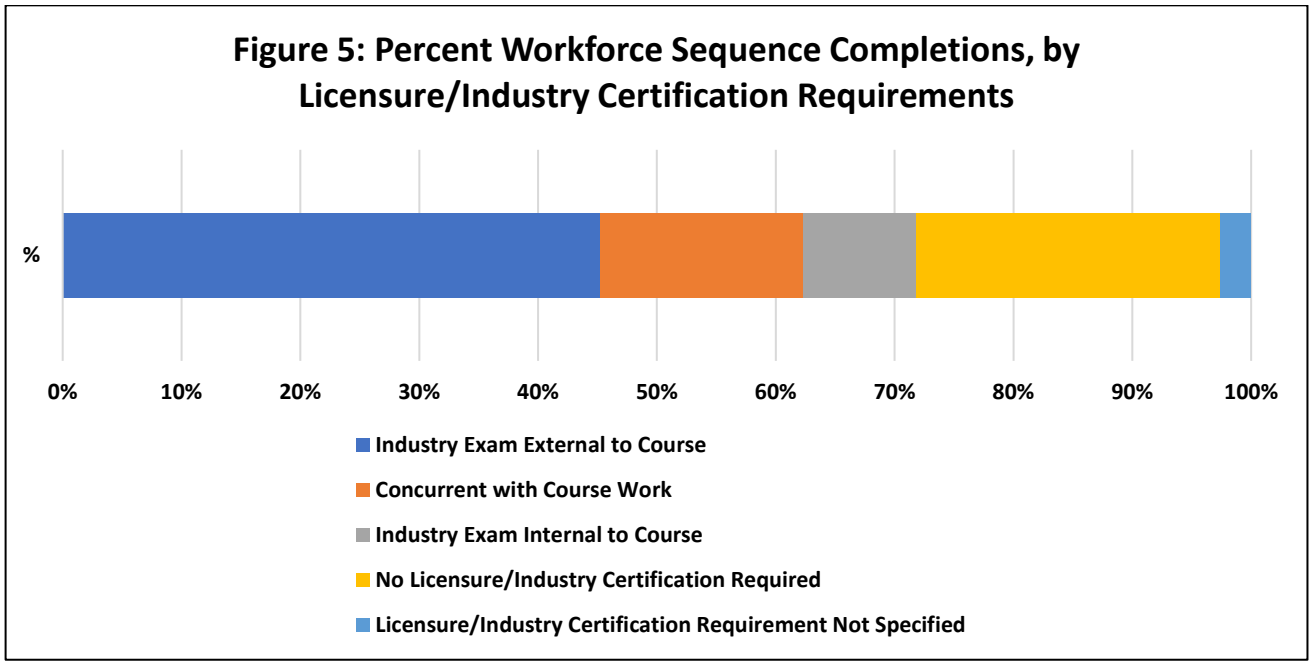
[1]Licensure/industry certification is an external requirement for completion of course or sequence.

[2]Licensure/industry certification is awarded upon completion of course or sequence.

[3]Licensure/industry certification is required for completion of course or sequence.

[4]Course or sequence does not require licensure/industry certification for completion.

[5]Course or sequence does not specify whether licensure/industry certification is required for completion.



Conclusion

As the project team works with the partners of individual states to learn about noncredit offerings and the noncredit data infrastructure, there are several conclusions and lessons learned specific to the findings from Maryland and the corresponding state context:

- Maryland's data collection efforts for noncredit programs are robust, particularly in the realm of noncredit workforce training courses/programs. It is evident that the state prioritizes gathering detailed information on programs designed to enhance employability and address labor market needs. This focus on workforce-oriented noncredit programs allows policymakers to understand the demographic composition, employment outcomes, and overall effectiveness of these programs in preparing students for the job market. The demographic breakdown shows who is benefiting from these opportunities, while post-completion employment data provide insights into the success of these programs in improving completers' economic prospects.
- The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) provides an interactive dashboard and visualization tools that make data on noncredit workforce programs easily accessible to policymakers and stakeholders. These tools are crucial as they allow users to explore the data in a dynamic way, facilitating better understanding of these programs and more informed decision-making. Policymakers can quickly assess trends, compare outcomes across different fields of study, and identify areas needing attention. It should also be noted that the dashboard presents a wide range of information in addition to noncredit workforce programs, making it easy to compare data across different sectors, such as between completers of credit-bearing and noncredit-bearing programs. This transparency and accessibility fosters greater public engagement with the data. Other states that are contemplating making state-level data accessible to the general public could use MHEC's dashboard as a model.
- While Maryland's data collection system is already strong, there is room to expand and improve the data available on noncredit workforce programs. Currently, the focus is primarily on program completers. Expanding this to include total enrollment headcount across different workforce training courses/programs would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sector. Such data would help determine whether noncredit workforce programs attract different demographics compared to workforce-oriented programs offered by the credit-bearing sector and offer insights into completion rates across various subpopulations and fields of study. This information is essential for evaluating the reach and effectiveness of noncredit workforce programs.
- A deeper understanding of noncredit program success requires more detailed information on instructional characteristics and certification processes. For instance, data on work-based learning components, certification test costs, student participation in these tests, and test outcomes would be particularly useful. This information could help identify the key factors that contribute to higher completion rates and credential attainment, guiding improvements in program design and delivery. MHEC has been engaged in an ongoing effort to systematically collect industry credential and testing-related information from credential awarding organizations.
- The current data collection practices in Maryland are heavily focused on workforce-oriented noncredit programs, leaving a gap in the data for noncredit programs that focus on personal

enrichment or basic skills development. As a result, program-level information, such as student demographic characteristics and learning outcomes, is less complete or not available for these programs. However, Maryland embraces the idea that the data infrastructure should grow over time, so it is possible that this inquiry may lead to insights that could expand future data collection in the noncredit sector.

Appendix A

Employment Outcomes for Noncredit Workforce Course/Sequence Completers (2020–23 Collection Year)

Classification of Instructional Programs	Total Completions, AY2021 to AY2023	1 Year Before Completion		Total Completions, AY2021 to AY2022	1 Year Post-Completion	
		% with Valid Earnings	Average Quarterly Earnings		% with Valid Earnings	Average Quarterly Earnings
Agricultural/Animal/Plant/Veterinary Science & Related Fields	948	39%	$15,632	600	67%	$20,152
Architecture & Related Services	19	26%	*	19	79%	$13,809
Communication, Journalism, & Related Programs	49	20%	$16,457	29	48%	$21,688
Computer & Information Sciences & Support Services	4,149	37%	$13,239	2,856	58%	$16,988
Culinary, Entertainment, & Personal Services	296	43%	$8,675	182	65%	$10,426
Education	3,687	38%	$15,364	1,977	52%	$13,754
Engineering/Engineering-Related Technologies/Technicians	295	41%	$13,698	209	67%	$18,665
Foreign Languages, Literatures, & Linguistics	77	39%	$13,911	54	57%	$16,570
Family & Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences	4,649	40%	$8,317	3,820	61%	$10,131
Legal Professions & Studies	281	30%	$14,266	273	37%	$16,991
English Language & Literature/Letters	74	22%	$10,938	43	44%	$17,000
Biological & Biomedical Sciences	1,018	29%	$20,453	471	33%	$27,890
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	12	*	*	12	58%	*
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, Fitness, & Kinesiology	147	41%	$7,997	103	80%	$13,605
Basic Skills & Developmental/Remedial Education	1,609	21%	$2,377	786	54%	$7,140
Health-Related Knowledge & Skills	1,957	53%	$11,699	986	72%	$12,618
Interpersonal & Social Skills	410	17%	$20,536	302	22%	$22,169
Leisure & Recreational Activities	41	32%	$14,966	29	59%	$18,512
Personal Awareness & Self-Improvement	34	24%	*	18	33%	*
Psychology	725	59%	$16,137	267	72%	$16,870
Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting & Related Protective Services	4,401	53%	$23,170	2,049	79%	$24,068
Public Administration & Social Service Professions	612	48%	$18,713	216	65%	$19,511
Construction Trades	2,304	56%	$16,718	1,507	66%	$19,308
Mechanic & Repair Technologies/Technicians	2,015	57%	$15,561	1,251	71%	$18,801
Precision Production	1,006	58%	$15,986	595	69%	$16,211
Transportation & Materials Moving	4,340	40%	$9,671	1,497	66%	$17,941
Visual & Performing Arts	231	40%	$18,679	87	28%	$12,953
Health Professions & Related Programs	11,247	56%	$10,649	7,238	77%	$12,603
Business, Management, Marketing, & Related Support Services	8,511	37%	$18,794	5,968	64%	$22,496

Note.

*Data that may be identifiable based on the size or uniqueness of the population under consideration were not reported.

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Acknowledgements

We appreciate the insight, resources, and data provided throughout the project by our collaborators at the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center. We would like to convey special thanks to Emily Dow of MHEC for her thorough feedback. At the EERC, the authors would like to thank Tracy Cangiano for her support throughout various phases of the research, and Tom Hilliard for his helpful feedback. We would also like to thank Angel Butts of The Word Angel, LLC, who provided excellent editorial assistance. The authors are solely responsible for any errors.

This report was prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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