

Talent Strong Florida FAQs

1. What does it mean for Florida to be Talent Strong?

A Florida that is Talent Strong means the state is preparing its future workforce with the skills and education necessary to remain competitive in the global economy. It means prosperity for Florida families and our state in good times and bad, with an economy more resilient to recover from inevitable disruptions.

2. Why is it necessary for everyone to receive an education or training beyond high school?

Increasingly, to be competitive for most Florida jobs, candidates need a degree or credential beyond a high school diploma. In fact, all of Florida's fastest-growing occupations currently [require at least a technical certificate](#) for an entry-level job. Also, the jobs that don't currently require more than high school [are at the greatest risk of being automated](#) in the years ahead.

3. Aren't some people just not cut out to succeed in college?

Every Floridian has strengths and talents they can develop through further education and training. Although not every high school graduate might immediately embark on a full-time, four-year road to a bachelor's degree, no student should consider high school the final stop on their educational journey. There are many paths to success through higher education, and both younger students and adults can take a phased approach that includes technical certificates and associate degrees and builds upon educational attainment over time.

4. Is earning a college degree really worth it, given the cost of college and student debt?

Earnings rise with educational attainment. [Floridians with bachelor's degrees](#) earn more than twice as much annually compared to those with just a high school education. There are also ways to save on the cost of college. According to data from the U.S. Department of Federal Student Aid, [more than half of college students in Florida qualify for Pell grants](#), which are need-based and don't need to be repaid. Also, Florida's public colleges and universities are some of the most

affordable in the country; in fact, [two-thirds of recent Florida public university graduates did not take out a single loan](#), and those that did averaged about \$7,000 in loans. According to the [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity](#), two out of three Florida jobs within the next five years will require a postsecondary degree or credential, thus, education beyond high school is a strong return on investment.

5. With COVID-19 a persistent and destructive part of our lives, is now a good time to be returning to school or investing in training?

A [May survey of Florida voters](#) conducted for Florida College Access Network by Sachs Media Group found that 58% of Floridians had experienced job loss, pay cuts or a reduction in hours due to COVID-19, and more than one-third of residents believed they'll need additional training or education to find work at the same pay level. The hardest hit were Floridians with the least education. If we learned anything from the Great Recession, it's that education fosters economic resilience. The more education you have, the more likely you are to remain employed during times of economic hardship. In fact, [99% of jobs](#) that were created since the last recession went to people with at least some college education.

6. Many don't have the financial means to attend school or invest in training programs. How do we overcome that barrier?

Current data from the U.S. Department of Education show that [53% of Florida college students are from lower-income households](#) and qualify for the Pell grant and other forms of need-based financial aid. Overcoming the barriers blocking access to postsecondary education begins with access to aid and scholarship funding to ensure that lower-income students are not denied access due to financial constraints. Lower income students also need access to cost-free programs that help them get an early start to their educations, such as dual enrollment courses that count toward both high school and college credit.

7. What is the current state of Florida’s equity gap in education attainment, and why is it important to close?

According to calculations using data from [UF Bureau of Economic and Business Research](#) Florida’s working-age population will be 54% non-white by 2030. However, [data calculations](#) from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey suggest that Black and Hispanic Floridians trail White Floridians in attaining degrees by double digits. As we noted before, Floridians without education beyond high school are falling the furthest behind. For example, United Way Florida [reports](#) that 63% of Black Floridians struggle to afford basic necessities, compared to 56% of Hispanics and 40% of Whites. The key to the future prosperity of our state lies in ensuring that every single Floridian—Black, White or Brown, rich, poor or middle class—has equitable access to educational opportunities.

8. The increase in the automation of jobs in the coming years is a potential threat to job security for many Floridians. Will making Florida Talent Strong help address these concerns?

[Nearly 50% of U.S. jobs are at risk of being replaced by automation](#) in the coming decades. This is especially true in such fields as [hospitality and retail](#). To make Florida Talent Strong, Floridians young and old will need to embrace lifelong learning and continuously build their skills to remain competitive in our rapidly evolving economy.

9. What can state and community leaders do to make Florida Talent Strong?

We all have a role to play in making Florida Talent Strong, and the pathways to getting us there are varied and plenty. By applying the following Seven Conditions for Success to guide our policies and programs, we will set the stage for building a strong and recession-proof workforce for future generations:

1. Ensure **equitable access and support** for all current and future students
2. Provide **counseling and information** for those pursuing a higher education
3. Improve **affordability** to ensure that higher learning is an option for all Floridians
4. Educate the public on the **multiple pathways** that are available to them, including four-year degrees, two-year degrees, and credentials in high-

- demand fields that also earn college credit and “stack” toward a degree.
5. Stress the value of **lifelong learning** throughout an individual’s working career.
 6. Rely on **data-driven decision-making** for implementing policies and programs at the state and local levels.
 7. Cultivate and strengthen **community collaboration** devoted to erasing barriers to education success for all students, especially student groups traditionally left behind.