

The background of the slide is a photograph of graduates in black caps and gowns. Several hands are visible, some holding rolled-up diplomas. The scene is brightly lit, with a strong orange and yellow light source in the upper left corner, creating a lens flare effect. A semi-transparent orange rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and logos.

# First Credential Update

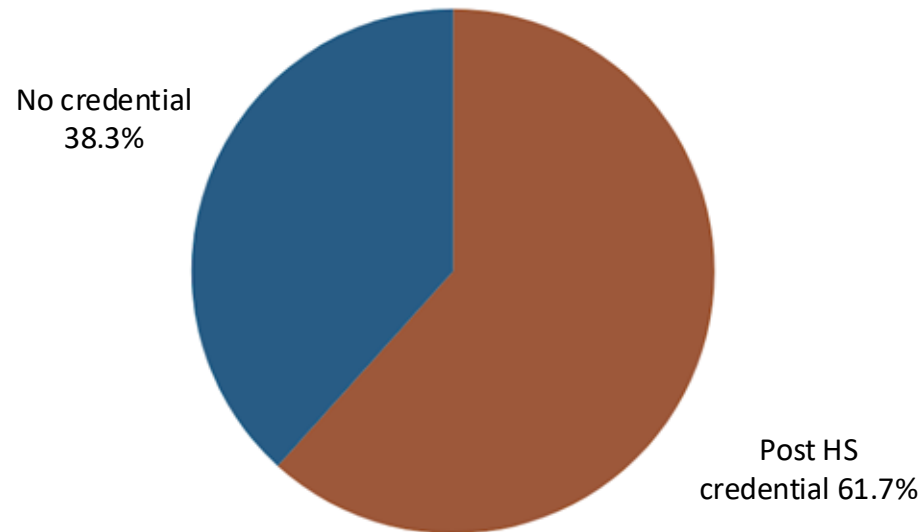
Utah Board of Higher Education  
January 9, 2026



# A Shared Goal

To ensure every Utah high school student has the opportunity to graduate with a credential that prepares them for college and the workforce by uniting state K-12 and higher education agencies in a comprehensive, collaborative effort.

## Utah's Educational Attainment: 2023



**61.7%** of adults in Utah have a post-high school degree, certificate, or certification

Only **1 out of 29 counties** in Utah reached 60% attainment

**37.3 percentage point gap** between Utah counties with the highest and lowest attainment rates (Summit: 63.4%; Uintah: 26.1%)

# Redefining Readiness

## *What is a First Credential?*

### **Concurrent Enrollment**

Completion of a 12-18 credit "Higher Education Ready" bundle of courses

### **Career & Technical Education**

Completion of a state-approved, employer-validated CTE pathway program of study

### **Industry-Recognized Credentials**

A credential endorsed by an industry body and validated by Utah employers for hiring or advancement

### **Technical College Certificates**

Completion of an approved certificate (or at least 300 hours) from a Utah public technical college

### **Youth Apprenticeship**

Completion of a minimum of 300 hours in an approved program combining paid work-based learning with classroom instruction

# Implementation: Year 1

## *Immediate Steps for Scalability*



**Year 1**

### **Systems Building & Rollout Plan**

- Create First Credential review committee, master list & sustained upkeep
- Create regional hubs for First Credential supports & needs assessment
- Launch First Credential grant application & begin scholarship redesign

### **Capacity & Feedback**

- Identify barriers: equipment, staffing, scheduling, transportation, rural access
- Establish ongoing LEA & HE feedback loops
- Surface needs for supports, resources, or policy changes

### **Data & Systems**

- Review statewide data systems to track enrollments, completions, and outcomes
- Inventory existing systems & recommend automation strategies
- Define/refine data-sharing and longitudinal linkage requirements

# Implementation: Years 2 & 3

## *Future Steps for Scalability*



**Year 2**

**Communication & Outreach**

**Student Navigation Support**

**Program Alignment**

**Policy Recommendations**



**Year 3**

**Update Master Plan & Master  
Credential List**

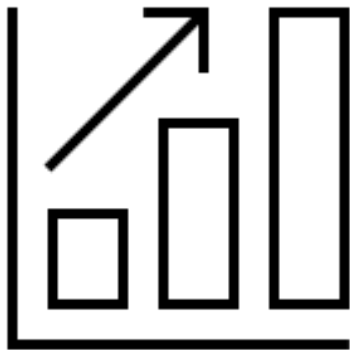
**Strengthen Postsecondary Integration**

**Validate Market Relevance**

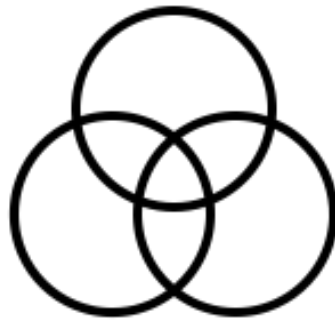
**Revisit Framework & Make  
Recommendations**

# The First Credential Advantage

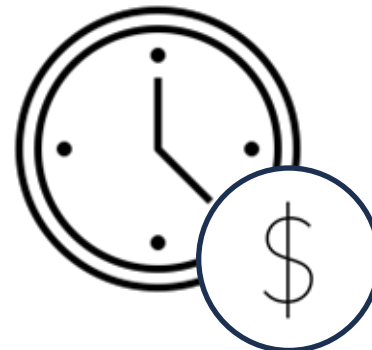
*Strengthening Higher Education's Mission & Impact*



A Stronger, Better  
Prepared Student  
Pipeline



Enhanced  
Enrollment through  
Cross-Sector  
Alignment



Reduced Time-to  
Completion and  
Increased  
Affordability



Reinforced  
Strategic  
Partnerships

# Thank You

