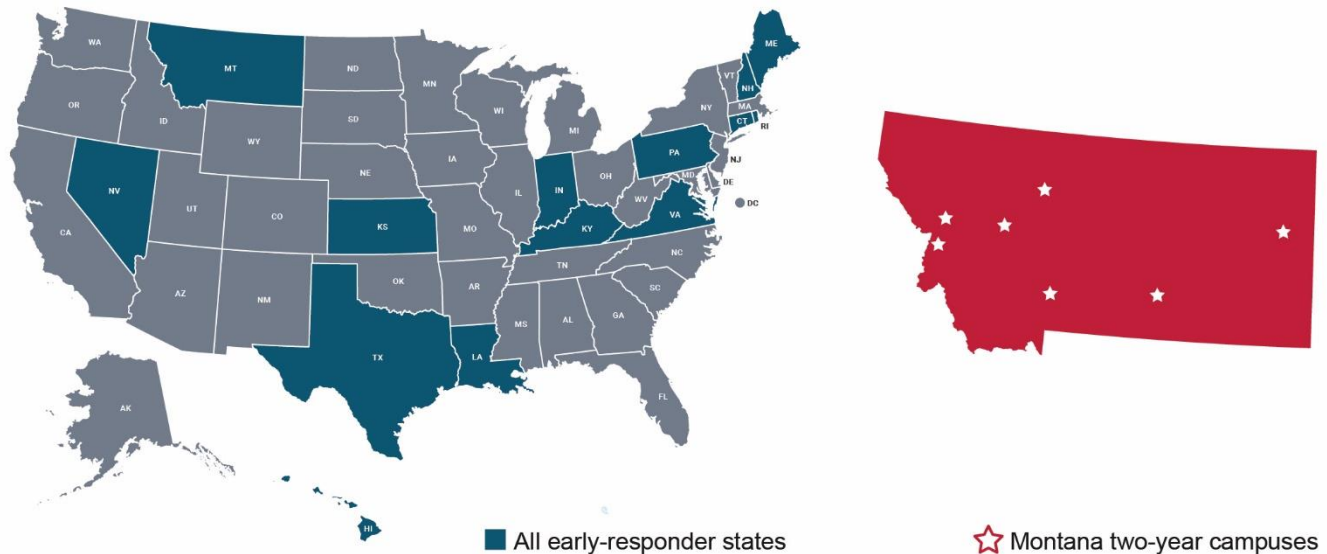


COMMUNITY COLLEGE WORKFORCE EDUCATION STUDY

In late 2020, Montana two-year campuses participated in a national study of community college workforce education. Montana was one of 14 states where education authorities volunteered to encourage colleges to respond early enough in 2020 to receive preliminary statewide results in January 2021. This brief compares Montana to the 14 states in this early-responder group.

The goal of the study: to explore the innovation under way at community colleges across the US and highlight what these institutions are doing to put Americans to work as the nation recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

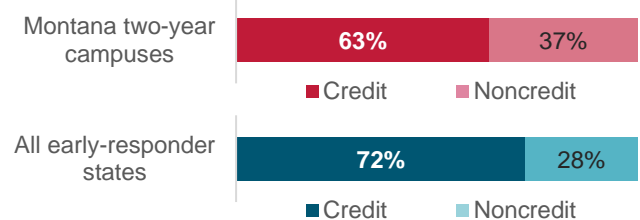
Early responders



Credit and noncredit enrollment

Community colleges report abundant information about students enrolled in credit-eligible programs. Much less is known about learners enrolled in institutions' noncredit divisions. This study begins to address that gap, with a special focus on two-year colleges' noncredit workforce education programs and relationships with employers.

Percentage of students in credit & noncredit programs



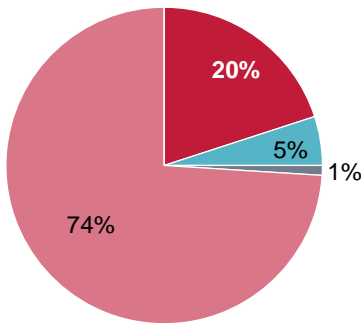
In 2019, 63 percent of Montana students on two-year campuses were enrolled in credit-eligible programs; 37 percent were enrolled in noncredit programs. This is a somewhat larger share than the average across all early-responder states, where 28 percent of students were enrolled in noncredit programs.

Noncredit programs

Noncredit programs may include customized contract training provided for specific employers, occupational education programs open to all qualified students, remedial education, English as a second language and personal interest courses, among other types of instruction.

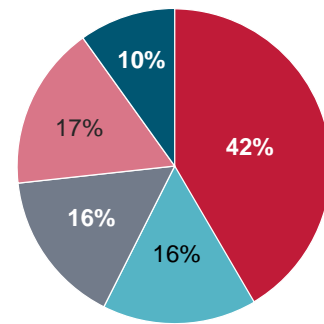
In 2019, 20 percent of Montana noncredit students on two-year campuses were enrolled in occupational programs open to all qualified students – a significantly smaller share than the average in all early-responder states.

Montana two-year campuses



All early-responder states

- Occupational programs open to all qualified students
- Customized contract training
- ABE/ESL/remedial education
- Recreational or personal interest courses
- Other



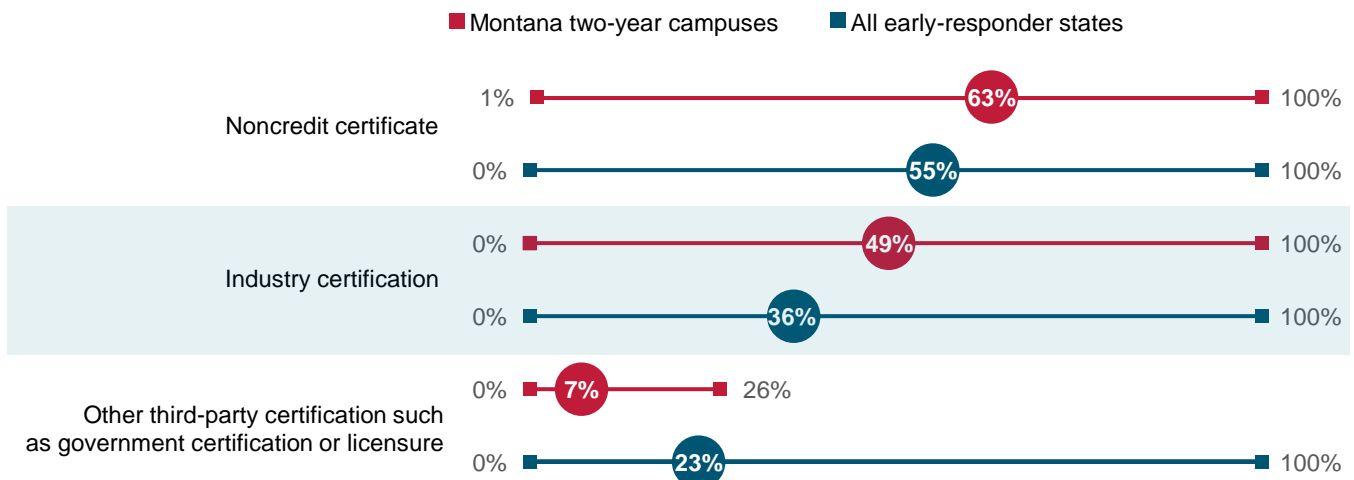
Noncredit workforce education

Credentials earned in noncredit occupational education programs

Students who complete noncredit workforce programs generally earn a credential of some kind, sometimes several credentials. In Montana, 49 percent of students who completed noncredit workforce programs earned industry certifications – a larger share than the average in all early-responder states.

Percentage of program completers who earned credentials

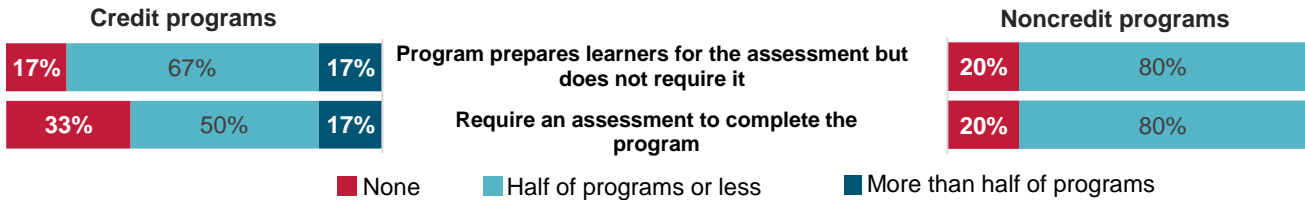
The **round dots** in this figure show the average percentage. The lines show the **minimum** and **maximum** percentages across participating colleges.



Embedding industry certifications

Unlike traditional academic credentials, which signal that students have attended and completed a course of study, industry certifications signal what learners know and what job-related tasks they can perform – occupation-specific knowledge and skills measured by tests developed by industry groups.

Percentage of Montana two-year campuses that embed certifications in credit & noncredit programs

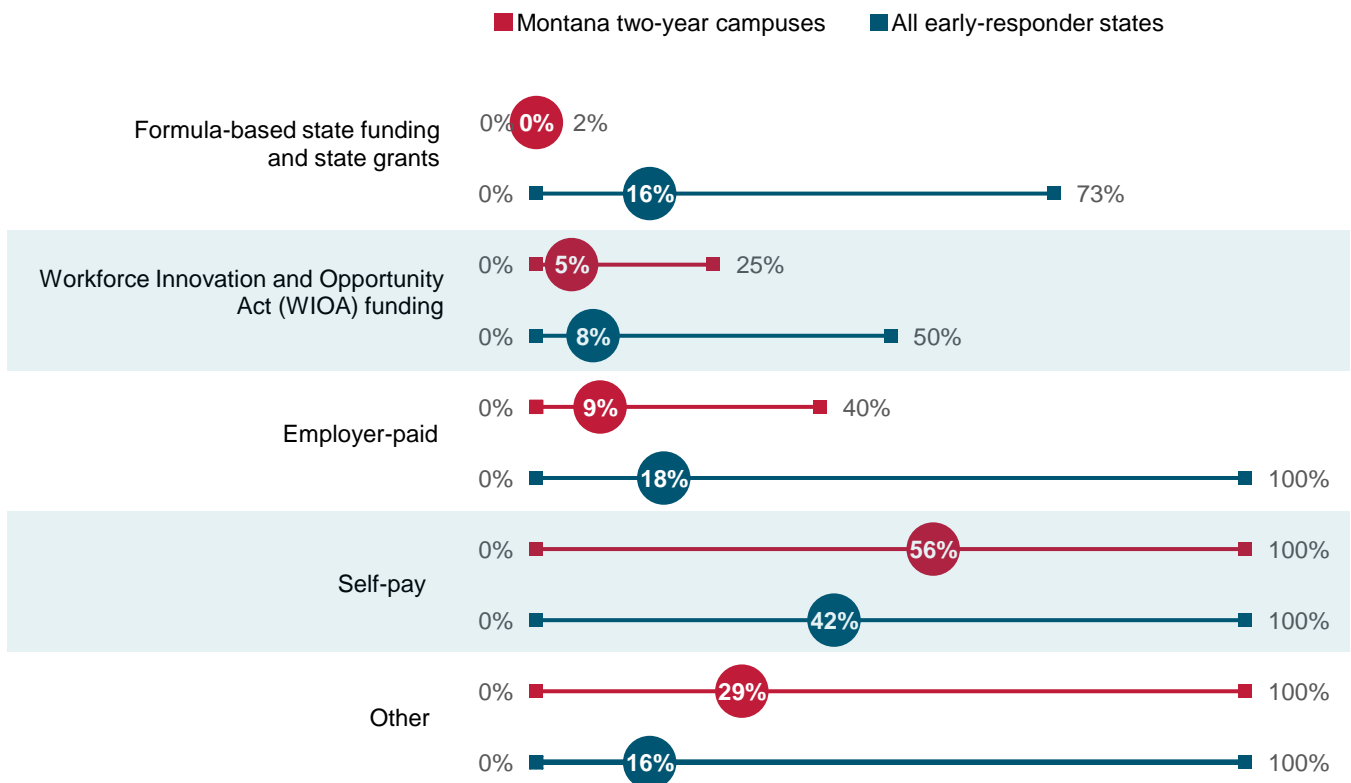


Funding

Montana two-year campuses look to a variety of sources to provide funding for noncredit occupational education, with 56 percent coming from students paying for tuition out of pocket.

Funding sources

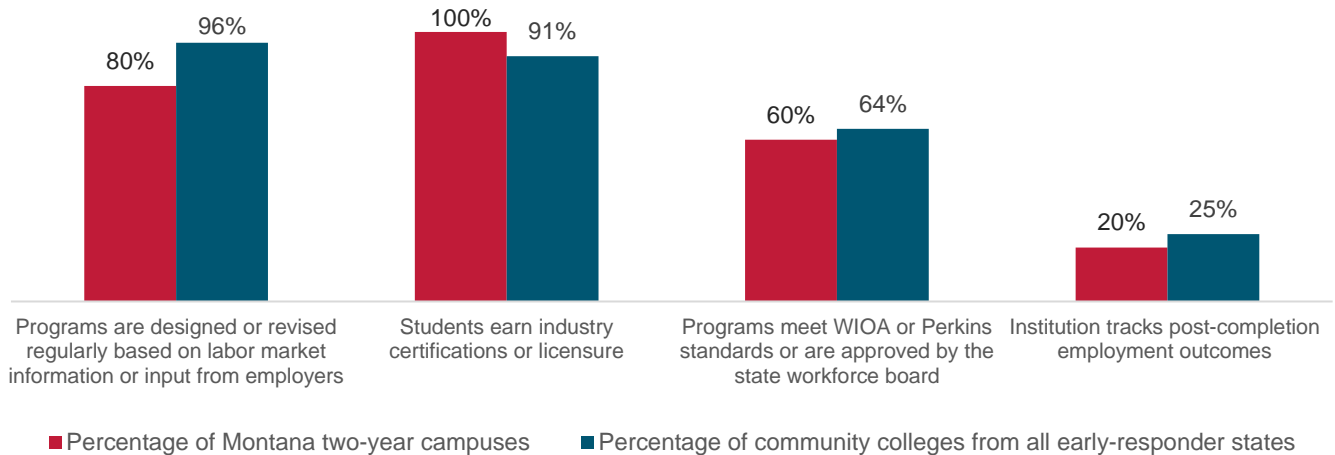
The **round dots** in this figure show the average percentage. The lines show the **minimum** and **maximum** percentages across participating colleges.



Quality assurance

Montana two-year campuses use a variety of strategies to ensure the quality of noncredit occupational programs. Some 80 percent of two-year institutions in the state said they use local employer input or regional labor market information to design or revise programs, and 100 percent report that students earn industry certifications or licensure.

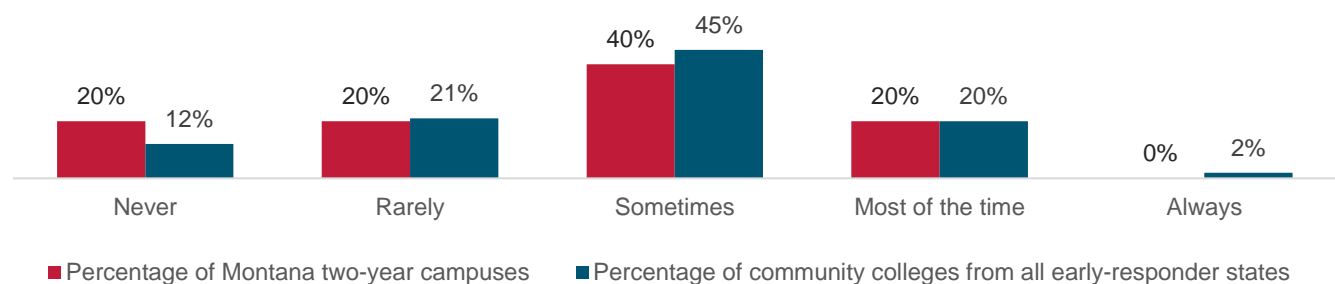
How community colleges ensure the quality of noncredit programs



Leveraging noncredit learning for college credit

One-fifth of Montana two-year campuses report that noncredit students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can leverage most or all of what they learned in a noncredit program for college credit 'most of the time' – comparable to the share at community colleges across all early-responder states.

Colleges where noncredit occupational students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can leverage what they learned for college credit



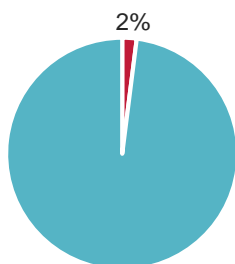
Demographics

Many community colleges do not track demographic data for noncredit workforce students. In Montana, there are no data available on noncredit workforce students' race and ethnicity. Across all 14 early-responder states, information of this kind is available for 68 percent of noncredit workforce students.

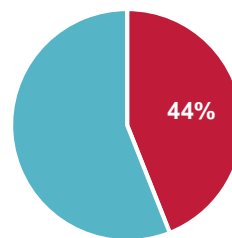
Employer engagement

Employers collaborate with community colleges in a wide variety of ways, from offering occasional labor market advice to partnering actively to design and provide instruction.

Employers offering customized contract training



Employers offering work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships and co-ops



Percentage of employer partners at Montana two-year campuses

More about this study

Ten Montana two-year campuses were invited to participate in this study in October 2020, and seven responded by December 10, 2020, for a 70 percent response rate. This brief reflects the responses provided by participating colleges only and may not be representative of all two-year campuses in the state.

Montana data were compared with data from 127 community colleges in 14 early responder states.

All questions in the study asked about fiscal year 2019. Participating colleges could pass over questions they were unable to answer; missing responses were excluded from calculated percentages.

As postsecondary workforce education evolves, so does the language used to describe it, and different educators in different states often use different terminology. The language used in this study represents an effort to find common ground but may not conform exactly with the terminology used in every state.

The survey is still being administered in some parts of the country and is still open to Montana two-year institutions that have not yet responded.



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